Palmtop

The journal for today's Psion user

Issue 14 Bimonthly

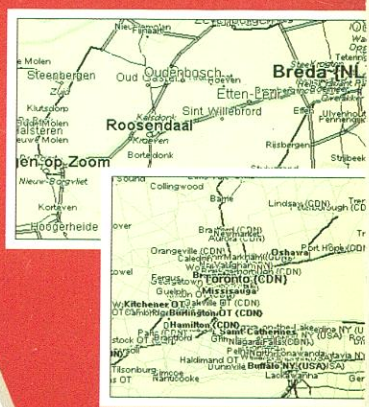
Finding Your Way...

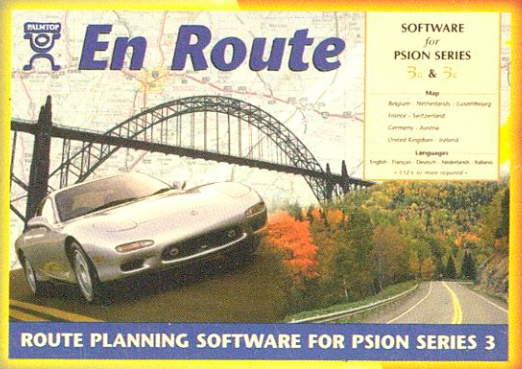
Route planning on your Psion —12 products on test

PLUS!

New product reviews

- PsiMac
- PsiFax
- Shareware on CD
- New games
- New books
- and more...



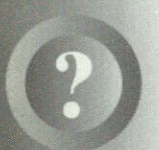


The Purple Software Sigma Membership Programme

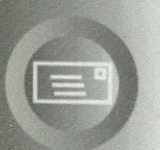
News

Reviews

Products



Support



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- Prize draws
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For more information on how to become a Sigma member

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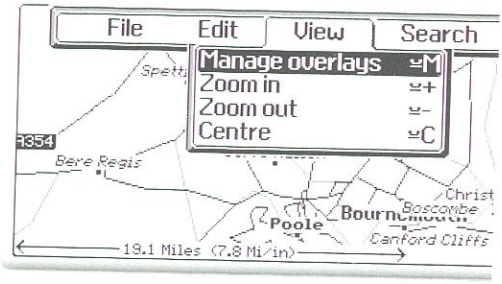

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Editorial

I've had so many similar discussions over the past few months. Subscribers have called the *Palmtop* office, asking whether they should 'upgrade' to the Series 5. One person even asked "Why didn't you put a summary at the bottom of the Series 5 review, saying whether or not it was worth upgrading?"

Of course, things are never so clear cut in reality. Like any new product the Series 5 has several things in its favour, and some against it. Also, much is purely subjective: for instance one person called me to announce that the Series 5's screen contrast was so poor that he had promptly returned it to the shop for a full refund, while another person said that he hadn't even noticed any problem.

Hardened Series 3 users are undoubtedly the very worst critics of the Series 5. They notice every aspect of the built-in software that is different, every missing menu option, and every minute of reduced battery life. Series 3 users dissect every such shortcoming, and crucify Psion for each and every one of them.

If you give a '5' to a non-Psion user they tend to respond quite differently. They don't *know* that the older models had an outliner built into the word processor, they don't *know* that you used to be able to sort spreadsheet entries into alphabetical order, and they certainly don't know that the screen contrast is inferior to the Series 3. These people look at it, and see it as an exceptionally powerful handheld computer—in its own right. Those who have previously seen machines like the Windows CE, Apple or US Robotics offerings will usually comment that the Psion is a stronger machine.

The bottom line is that the Series 5 is an excellent computer for some people, and a not-so-excellent computer for others. The same goes for the Series 3, the Philips Velo, the USR Pilot, or any other machine you care to name. The Series 5's shape makes it less convenient than a Series 3 for most people to pull out of a pocket and use while standing, and the large keyboard makes it much easier for most people to type on—*most*, but not all.

Working on *Palmtop* magazine means that I have to keep one of every Psion computer model handy at all times for editorial purposes, but although I'm lucky enough to be able to choose which machine to use, for some tasks I still prefer the Series 3 over the Series 5. That's not to say that I advocate readers

buying two machines for their own use, simply that the newer and 'more powerful' machine isn't always the best choice. I'm writing this article on my Series 5 while sitting on the train, returning home from a visit to Psion in London. The Series 5 is my 'laptop'. I couldn't bring myself to take out a real laptop computer in a cramped train, but the Series 5 is small, convenient, and above all it's unobtrusive. The only downside to using the Series 5 on a moving train is that selecting text using the pointer is a bit like pinning the tail on a moving donkey—frantically trying to stab the right spot on the screen while swaying from side to side.

I previously used my Series 3 in much the same way, but I never really got along with those calculator-like keys, and my typing only ever reached about half the speed I can manage on the '5'. I still find the Series 3 a better 'organiser' though—much as I dislike the term, and the '3' is just that little bit more pocketable, and is certainly more comfortable to use while standing up or moving around. Also, the curvaceous Series 3 still has more sex *appeal* than the 5, it's simply a nicer thing to carry around.

For anyone who prizes the portability factor, the tiny Siena is also worth considering, as it feels much smaller than even the '3', and offers at least 70-80% of the functionality.

Psion have recently dropped the price of both the Series 3c and Siena, now consolidating the entire range into 512K and 1MB Sienas, the 2MB backlit Series 3c (all other Series 3 variants have now been dropped), plus the 4MB and 8MB Series 5s. This forms a range of 5 machines from around £130 to £500—a broad price range. Before considering which machine is best for you, consider the all-important issue of power versus portability, and examine all the features you think you are likely to use, against those you know you won't need. The ideal machine for you probably exists somewhere in the Psion range—you just need to find out which.

Steve Clack - September 1997

Palmtop is...

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Pete Sipple - Associate Editor

Leigh Edwards - Technical Consultant

Steve Litchfield - Senior Contributor

Rosemary Rolfe - Distribution Manager

Thanks... to all the contributors whose names appear within the magazine, particularly Stephen Murgan and Rick Andrews for their regular contributions. Thanks also to all those who have kindly supplied their products for evaluation.

Palmtop News

The latest hot gossip on what's happening in the Psion world

Series 3 range rationalised, and price drops *again*

Psion's 'range' of Series 3 machines has now been depleted to a single model. The only unit now in production is the 2MB backlit 3c, and the price has been dropped from its most recent £329.95 to only £299.95 (including VAT).

Sienas down at last

Siena prices have also been dropped in a bid to increase sales. The 512KB model will now retail at £129.95, and the 1MB at £199.95, a fall of £40 and £30 respectively.

Series 5 products on the way

A small number of commercial Series 5 products have been released already, but several more are on the way—some in time for Christmas. Psion have several of their own offerings in the pipeline, including their Internet connectivity suite (see below), a Monopoly game, Berlitz Phrase Book, Pocket Quicken (finance management) and the Presentation Pack, a business presentation/slide show program.

...But no PsiMail

The Series 5 equivalent to PsiMail Internet, to be known as the 'Messaging Pack', is claimed to be due for release sometime in October, but as of late September there is still no sign of even a beta release of the product. An actual shipping date in November now seems more likely (though unconfirmed), and we hope to provide a full review in the next issue of *Palmtop*.

1998 Series 5 ROM upgrade

Psion plan to offer an enhanced Series 5 ROM upgrade in the first half of 1998. See page 58 for details.

First EPOC32 licensee announced

The first licensee of the new EPOC32 operating system was announced on 10th September. Philips Consumer Communications (PCC) will be using the ROM-based 32-bit operating system in a wide range of data and messaging companions, the first of which will be launched during the first quarter of 1998.

These devices will support fax send/receive and e-mail, as well as personal information management applications and Internet access. They will not compete directly with Psion's range of palmtops, but will be squarely positioned as portable phones.

Psion shares on the rise again after sharp drop

Psion PLC's shares hit a high of £5.09 just before the launch of the Series 5. The price dropped substantially at the time of the Series 5 launch, due to a coincidental slowdown of Series 3c sales (mainly due to leaked news of the Series 5 release) and on news of the large amounts invested into the Series 5. Share prices hit a low of around £2.87 in early August, and have grown steadily since, with most analysts recommending to buy.

Palmtop BV busy on new Series 5 software

Palmtop BV (no connection with *Palmtop Publications*) has now released its advanced route planning software for the Series 3 and Series 5 range (see page 35 for more details). They also have several other Series 5 programs under development, including Expense Manager, Financial Calculator, electronic versions of Collins' Dictionaries, The Holy Bible, and 'The Portable Chef', containing thousands of recipes.

Ericsson connectivity for 3c

A new telephone from Ericsson, the GS18 Data Phone, now offers integrated communications from the Psion Series 3c. The phone has its own built-in modem and therefore connects directly to the 3c without the need for a separate modem card and adaptor. The telephone is supplied with its own simple

cable for direct connection to a 3c, and offers e-mail, faxing, web browsing and SMS messaging via the Vodafone digital mobile network.

The GS18 is available with a 3c connection kit at an introductory price of £199 (inc. VAT) until 31st October 1997. Contact your nearest Vodafone outlet for more details.

Series 5 AC adaptors recalled

All Series 5 mains adaptors sold in the UK since the machine's release are being recalled by Psion due to a possible problem with the plug's pins breaking off. For safety reasons, Psion recommends all users to refrain from using the adaptors and to telephone them on freephone 0800 0186637. Psion will arrange a replacement unit to be sent as soon as possible.

A new hard case

Palm-Tec Ltd have recently released a new-style ABS plastic hard case for the Series 3/3a/3c and the Series 5. The plastic 'box' design offers more protection against hard knocks than conventional leather cases, and has a thin layer of foam padding inside. The cases are priced at £24.95 including VAT, and are available directly from Palm-Tec.

Palm-Tec Ltd
Tel/fax: 01342 317416
E-mail: palmtec@aol.com
www: http://members.aol.com/palmtec/

Psion wins European award

Psion was recently named 'European Company of the Year' by the editors-in-chief of the European Business Press

Federation (UPEFE) at a ceremony in Athens, Greece. The award was bestowed after analysis of 4000 companies' performance during 1996.

A new Cyclone brewing...

Purple Software are shortly due to release a new 'universal' version of their popular Cyclone floppy disk drive for Psion computers. The new model will feature connection to the 3a, 3c *and* Siena, with all connection cables included in a single package. Purple have also made other improvements to the hardware, including a fully detachable cable and a revised battery arrangement. A full review will appear in the next issue.

Purple Software Limited
Tel: 0171 3877777
Fax: 0171 3871188

Non-Psion CompactFlash

For the first time ever, Psion now have serious competition in the provision of storage media. All non-Psion CompactFlash devices should work on the Series 5 without problems, and many are substantially cheaper than Psion's own.

In particular, Clove Technology are offering CF devices produced by *Simple Technology*. These CFs are at least 25% cheaper than Psion's own, offer a five year warranty, and are currently available in sizes up to 32MB, with larger ones due later this year. The cards also perform faster than Psion's own (SanDisk) cards, and consume less power from the Series 5. We will be publishing a full long-term test of competing CF cards in the next issue of *Palmtop*.

As a special offer exclusively for *Palmtop* readers, Clove Technology (see inside back cover for full contact details) are offering the following special prices *until the end of October 1997 only*. Please quote reference code PJST5 when ordering.

Special offers on CF disks

4MB CompactFlash	**normally ~~£95.17~~**	**NOW £72.85**
8MB CompactFlash	**normally ~~£135.12~~**	**NOW £104.57**
12MB CompactFlash	**normally ~~£211.50~~**	**NOW £163.32**
16MB CompactFlash	**normally ~~£266.72~~**	**NOW £205.62**

All prices include VAT at 17.5%

E&OE

Shareware Shorts

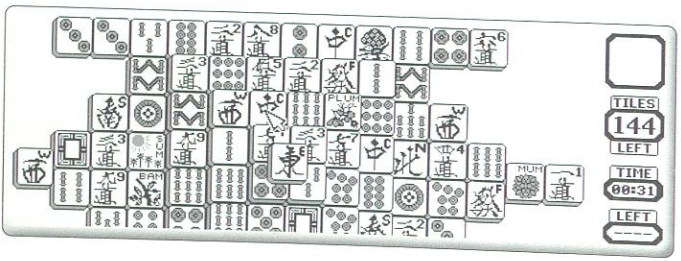
Pete Sipple takes a look at the latest additions to the world of Psion Shareware...

A PsiWin alternative

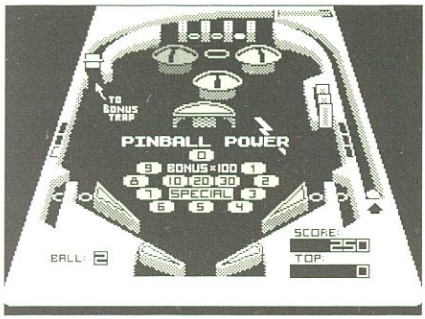
Windows 95 users can now use the Explorer interface to access their 3a without buying PsiWin. *DS3aEXPL*, short for 'David Spooner's 3a Explorer Extension', connects via the soap-on-a-rope and creates a 'My S3a' desktop icon. Opening this shows you the drives, folders and files and allows drag 'n' drop. Version 1.0 is free. A new version is under development, which should run under Windows NT. **DS3AEXPL.ZIP (806K)**

Try Shanghai

Probably the most prolific games author, Ben Vaughan has released a new game for the Psion 3a, 3c and the Series 5. *Shanghai* is a classic game where you have to remove matching pairs of Mah Jongg tiles until all 144 have been taken from the board. With high quality graphics, speech, and sound effects it's very addictive. **SH-3A-11.ZIP (64K)**



Shanghai, an attractive memory game for your Psion Series 3 or 5



A new emulator for the Series 5!

No, it's not what you think. It's not the Series 5 emulator that many have been waiting for, but a program that allows you to emulate a Sinclair Spectrum Z80 on a Psion. Though it's still in beta, many Spectrum users in various online forums are raving about this breakthrough. Note however that only snapshots and tapes (Z80, SNA and TAP files) are supported, and software specifically written for the 128K Spectrum won't load. Dig out those old games and download beta 0.50 of **SPECTRUM.ZIP (43K)** from http://www.palmtop.nl/spectrum.html

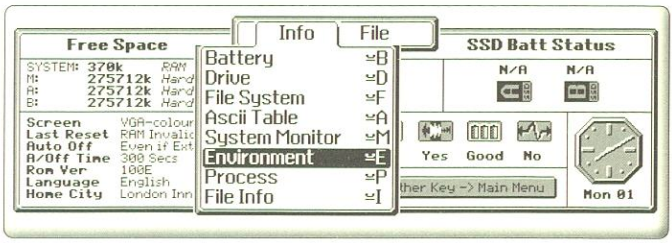
Stargazers ahoy

If you like to watch the night sky, don't fail to try this excellent freeware program. Very extensive, very flexible and very impressive! Gaze in wonder at version 2.06 of *Procyon Light*. **P_LHT206.ZIP (246K)**

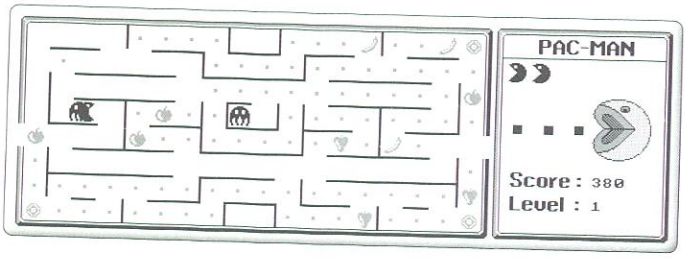
The Psion user's guide to the galaxy—Procyon Light

System addict

P-info is a rather nifty utility for the Series 3a/3c which gives very detailed



P-info. Battery information, memory information and more



That grand old classic, now on your Series 3—Pac-Man

information about the state of your machine. Featuring 8 main modes of operation, *P-info* gives you access to battery information, drive space, system settings, process information and much more. Registration gives you additional file information, a font and picture viewer, plus a sound player. **PINFO.ZIP (22K)**

Waka-Waka

The old favourite Pac-Man has made it to the 3a/3c. Check out this classic arcade game—it'll all come flooding back. **PACMAN.ZIP (27K)**

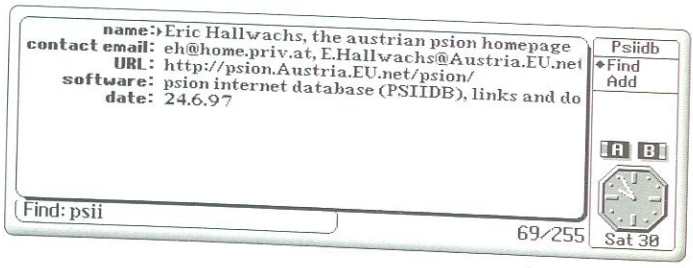
Other additions

TimeMan, the 'Swiss Army Knife' of time tools is now at version 4. Installing this small program may obsolete a lot of those small utilities you've acquired over the years: stopwatch, world clock, quick notes, voice memos and a whole lot more. Check out the new **TMAN400F.ZIP (54K)**

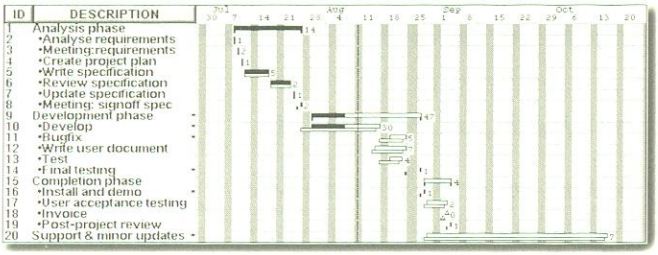
PSIIDB is the brainchild of the Austrian Psion Homepage author. This DBF file is a database of all that's Psion on the Internet, with useful addresses and information. As well as the version for DATA, there is also a searchable online equivalent at http://www.psion.priv.at/psion/ **PSIIDB.ZIP (17K)**

Now available for the '5'

Andy Clarkson's hugely popular *Plan* software has made the transition to the new Psion machine, and is looking good. If you've already used this software on your 3, it's worth the 122K



PSIIDB, a .DBF database of useful Internet addresses



Sophisticated project planning for the Series 5. Andy Clarkson's superb PLAN

download to see how the larger screen complements the package. **PLAN5.ZIP**

Wipe out some maze monsters in the Series 5 version of the popular Doom-like *Dungeon* game from Nick Dawkins. **S5DUNG1-0.ZIP (60K)**

A small stopwatch program for the S5. **S5STOPW.ZIP (3K)**

Keep an eye on just how battery-hungry your Series 5 is with *BatCheck*, which can be cleverly configured to notify you when the battery state changes, and show the battery status when the Series 5 is switched on. It's free. **BTCHK10.ZIP (5K)**

New for the Siena

Psi-Tact is now available for the Siena. It's a cut-down version of the Series 3 program which gives Siena users access to a complete contact management program. Features include search, 'send to AGENDA' and 'find in Data'. **PSITACSI.ZIP (38K)**

PsioYahtzee, the Siena version of the dice favourite, is a must for all games enthusiasts. Very addictive and with several attractive features, give **YAHTZEE.ZIP (13K)** a try.

Many of the programs listed here can be found at the Palmtop magazine website, http://www.palmtop.co.uk/

If you can't find a particular piece of software mentioned above, or you've found an excellent program that I've missed, please e-mail me at petesipple@aol.com

The classic dice game running on a Siena

Get ALL the shareware featured in this issue on a floppy disk - see page 109

Readers' Letters

Contribute and WIN PRIZES!

The Prize Letter in each issue wins the author a FREE software package or other Psion goodies from our special collection. Prizes are valued at up to £70 each!

Do they really use it?

Reading your article in issue 13, I see that the new Series 5 lacks a 'numeric' keypad on which you could more easily enter numbers.

I migrated from an HP100 to the 3c some time ago, and quickly discovered that it is time consuming to use the 3c's spreadsheet and calculator using the row of numeric keys along the top. Do the people at Psion *really* use their built-in spreadsheet and calculator? I doubt it, otherwise this would be the first thing to have been corrected.

It is easy enough to get a numeric keyboard on top of the UIOJKLM keys, using some other key combination (like caps lock) to block their use in other applications. Why was such a simple time saver omitted from the Series 5?

Joaquim Jofre
Reus, Spain

The future of Java?

As you probably know, Psion sent copies of Psion User out to everyone recently to blag about the Series 5. One throwaway line that caught my attention was that they were going to introduce a Java development kit of some kind in the future.

So I eagerly awaited *Palmtop* for more details, but there weren't any (unless I'm completely blind) I'm particularly interested as I've been reluctant to learn OPL, because it's of no use outside the Psion world. Java would be a different matter and would probably be enough to talk me out of £500 on its own. If you

know any more please could you put it in the next issue, as I'm sure others will be thinking the same.

The other thing I don't think you mentioned for the Series 5 was the amount of system memory it has. I've got a 2MB 3a and I find the 512K system memory limitation much more restricting than the 2MB total RAM limit. Does the Series 5 have a similar limitation, or can all the memory be used to run programs in?

Nick Clark
Christchurch, Dorset

Java development is still in its infancy on the Psion platform, but you can find out more about it in the Programmers' Workshop section of this issue. There is no partitioning within the Series 5 RAM, so any or all of it can be used for running programs-Ed.

All forgotten?

So *Palmtop* is already all for the 5 and the 3a is forgotten—even 'The journal for today's Psion user' prefers to write about the HP rather than the 3a.

In less than a year my machine is obsolete and ignored!

I suppose it is to be expected. It's not your fault, but I don't want the 5 rammed down my throat—you must write for your readership, and I guess they will all be Series 5 users soon. Not me.

Well done for the past issues.

David Harrow
Maidstone, Kent

Thank you for your comments David, but I'd like to make a few observations:

1. **We don't 'prefer' to cover the HP rather than the Series 3. This is the first time we've ever reviewed a non-Psion computer, and it was done because so many readers have asked for information on how the CE machines compare to the Psion offerings. Although we have no intention to give regular coverage of non-Psion computers in the magazine it's important that we don't simply ignore what else is going on in the industry. Readers generally want to stay informed, and it's our brief to provide the necessary information.**
2. **The Series 3a/3c is neither obsolete nor ignored. The Series 5 is simply a new addition to the Psion range, and being the biggest development in Psion's entire history it's important that we gave it extensive coverage at the time of its launch. I think it's true to say that at least 95% of Psion users are interested to read about the new machine, regardless of whether they intend to purchase one at this time.**

3. **We *do* write for our readership, and this is overwhelmingly Series 3a/3c users at present. With this in mind, issue 14 comprises less than 10% *dedicated* Series 5 content. The content of the magazine will continue to reflect the spread of our readership, and you can expect the bulk of the magazine to cater for Series 3a/3c users for some time to come-Ed.**

PsiMail joy...

What a surprise—I have just got home with my brand new Travel Modem and PsiMail Internet software. Four hours later I have not only configured the Psion Internet account (really easy with the built-in wizard), but have my demon account fully configured to run with POP3.

As a user I have very basic computer knowledge, but I found both the installation and configuration of the latest software superb—well done Psion. It gives me great hope for the future battles with Microsoft—I get the feeling that they'll need all the help they can get!

Richard Miller
Chorley, Lancashire

Confessions of a sad addict

It all started back in July. A colleague tracked down a new Psion Series 5 and brought it into the office. The moment I saw the keyboard I was hooked. A frantic day off work spent phoning round all the local suppliers and then I had my first fix. My very own Psion 5, and it's here that the confessions have to start.

Walking from room to room in my house, I find myself carrying the S5 with me, just so that I can feel reassured at its presence. And in idle moments I can pick it up, turn it round, fondle it, perhaps open and close that keyboard a few times and marvel at the design. Even in its carry case on my belt I cannot resist the temptation to keep popping the pen in and out of its spring-loaded housing, just for the sheer hell of it.

Every day, as dark approaches, I look forward to renewing my affair with the S5's backlight. I find excuses to 'just have a quick tap', trying to impress my family with the sexy green glow. It's fatal to turn the machine upside down. My hand automatically opens up the door and removes the 16Mb CompactFlash card. Oh so tiny. To think my life is stored on this inch of silicon.

Oh the lure of that Extras button! Press it once and a line of icons scrolls smoothly up. Press again and it slides down. And up. And down. Again and again. When the novelty wears off, I tap the clock a few times and watch it switch from digital to analogue and back. It's all too much, I need serious help! I do use the S5 for serious work, honest I do. Quite often, in fact. I'm

gripped with a fear, though, that in upgrading from the 3a I've moved on to a much harder drug. At least I could leave my 3a in a different room without going into convulsions.

David Menlow
Chester, Cheshire

An ode to Palmtop

This morning I was woken up
The postman at the door
I suppose it's only junk, I thought
And bills across the floor

Sifting through the envelopes
One just caught my eye
That postmark looked familiar
Ah yes—and I know why!

Now this one is important
I knew it straight away
The other jobs that I had planned
Could be done another day

(Now as I understand it
My role as head of house
Is to make sure all material
Is fine for kids and spouse)

So down I sat to read it through
I knew it would take ages
From front to back and back to front
That's more than 200 pages

Well now that I have read it
And read it through again
I'll give you my opinion
That really is quite plain:

It's great, It's *brill*, It's *brill*, It's great
Do you hear me loud and clear?
There's nothing that can match it
Of that you have no fear

Now there is one small problem
Of this I have been told
"Those other jobs that I had planned
Are no longer on hold"

So now my wife is reading
My Palmtop journal too
I don't know how she finds the time
With other jobs to do!

Len Baker
Leicester

Ever felt stupid?

I have *seven* children, so one might think that I have no time to work with my Psion. The fact is that my kids use it almost more than I do, but last night I spent several (five) hours trying to send e-mail with my 3c. I kept getting the 'serial port error' message and I kept on trying. Well, I finally gave up at around midnight and put it down. The next morning I awoke and began the process all over again—after only two hours I gave up. To my complete surprise, my seven year old daughter said, "Have you checked the batteries dad?" THE BATTERIES!

I did so, changed them, and the 3c connected immediately...

Hugh Dyer
Mandeville, Louisiana, USA

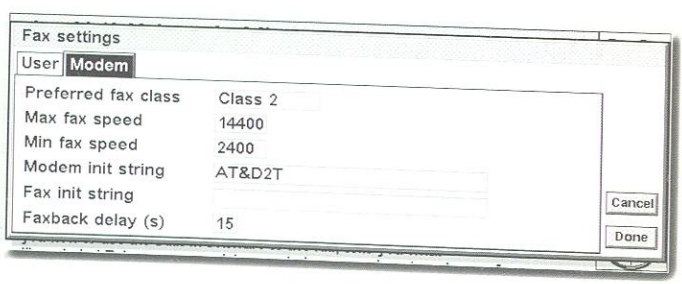
A Closer Look...

...at some of the newest and most interesting products available for your 3a/3c, Series 5 and Siena

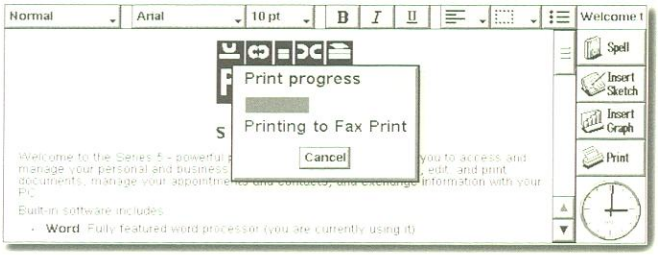
EasyFax

EasyFax lives up to its name—it makes faxing to and from your Series 5 easy. It was released, free of charge, via Psion's website in mid-July, and a revised version (1.01) followed a few weeks later. Though it may lack the bells-and-whistles that some users were expecting, for me it's a perfect piece of software: small, straightforward and efficient.

A few users have reported problems getting EasyFax up-and-running, but my installation went very smoothly. The downloaded file was unzipped, the PsiWin lead was connected, and it was then a case of running the PSISETUP.EXE file on my PC. This standard installation program copies all the necessary files into the correct locations on your Series 5. At the time of writing, a CompactFlash version of EasyFax is not available, so without Internet access, Windows 95, a PC and PsiWin, installation will not be so easy. The program

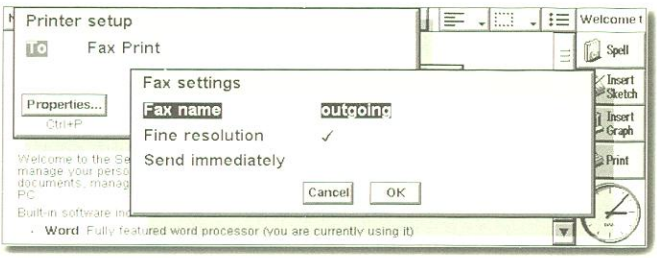


Setting up EasyFax on the Series 5



Printing to the fax driver

Setting up to start a fax



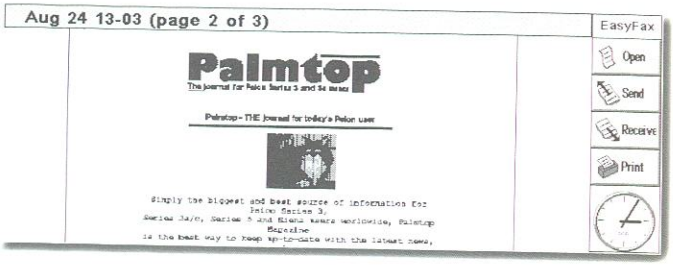
takes up little more than 150K of RAM on your '5', and takes an extra 75K when it's running.

Once installed, setting up EasyFax is fairly straightforward too. Fax Class 1 and Class 2 are catered for, but the 'auto detect' setting is recommended, and this switches to the correct type without user intervention. Maximum and minimum speed settings can also be set up (between 2400 and 14400 bps), and you can enter a modem and fax 'init string' if your modem needs any special settings. The only modification I had to make was to add a 'T' to the modem string, which specifies that my phone system allows for tone dialling. Information about making this change is clearly documented in the text file supplied with the software.

Does EasyFax do its job? I'm happy to say that I've tried it with Psion's own

Transmission in progress

Example of a received fax at low zoom



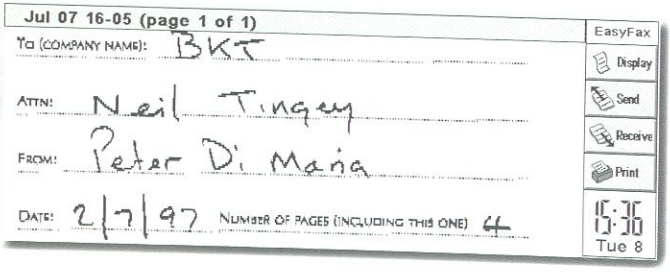
Travel Modem, a US Robotics Sportster, plus a Microlin fax modem, all with no problems.

Sending a fax is very easy, and this can be done from any Series 5 application that supports printing, including WORD, SHEET, SKETCH and AGENDA. It's a case of selecting 'Print', and changing the 'Printer type' to 'Fax print'. Provided EasyFax isn't already running you can select 'Immediate fax', otherwise you send your document to the outgoing queue. From EasyFax you can view what is about to be sent and enter the destination fax number.

Receiving a fax is also straightforward. There is basic provision to receive 'faxback' (a fax-on-demand service offered by some companies), or a more standard 'wait for fax'. Once received, each incoming fax is given a name consisting of date and time, e.g. 'Aug 24 13-03'.

The fax can be viewed with any of three zoom levels, the middle setting being remarkably readable. Faxes can then be printed or stored as required, and fax storage is quite efficient, with a two-page fax containing text and images received in 'fine' mode occupying only 81K of space.

There is only one known problem reported with EasyFax, and it's a minor one. Accessing the online help for the program causes the help system to open, but the file remains open until shut down from the system screen. In practice, this means that if you access help in another application, you get an 'in use' message until 'help' is stopped. Closing EasyFax's help using <Ctrl><E> solves the problem.



Example of a received fax at medium zoom

Overall, EasyFax is a very usable piece of software that does its job well. Full marks to Psion for making this freely available.

Pete Sipple

EasyFax

From: Psion's own web site as EASYFAX101F.ZIP

Availability: now

Contact: http://www.psion.com/

Runs on: Series 5

Supplied on: www only

Price: FREE

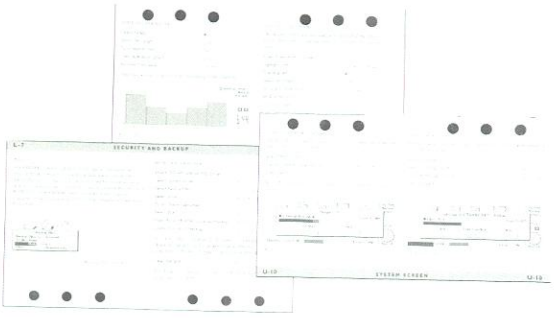
Rating:

Quick Reference Guides

Widget Quick Reference Guides

Two bright orange-coloured ring binders recently arrived on my desk for review, representing Widget's Quick Reference Guides to the Series 3c and the Siena. The ring binders are in standard 6-hole filofax format, but the text is done throughout in 'landscape' form, necessitating turning the whole guide on its side to read the pages, which I personally found less than convenient or intuitive. Print quality and presentation is excellent though, with suggested keypresses highlighted in red ink. Also, having the guides ring-bound means that they lay flat on a desk easily, and you can even insert your own reference material if desired.

The authors' aim in writing these guides was to 'unlock' the functionality in each machine. They've tried to steer a fine line between going into so much detail that the guide ceases to be 'Quick', and being so brief that the user may as well stick with Psion's original manual. On the whole I think they've succeeded. We've all been in the situation of struggling with a particular operation when a fellow Psion user says "Oh, you can do that much more quickly with Control-spacebar!", or some such key-press that we'd never come across. With these guides, you now have a comprehensive list of almost every keypress combination on either Psion machine, laid out in a fairly accessible chaptered format.



Each guide is divided into between 15 (the Siena) and 21 (the 3c) alphabetically-labelled chapters, covering all the built-in applications on each machine, plus subjects like Infrared, Security, Application icons and the System screen. The screen shots are nicely done, with an average of one per page, and the layouts are mostly clear and uncluttered.

The guides are at their strongest when leading you through multi-keypress operations such as copying ranges of cells in the spreadsheet, and each stage in the procedure is well laid out and easy to follow. However, I also found the odd error, including the very misleading statement that a file is saved on a Psion computer when the machine is switched off!

The Siena guide in particular may open the eyes of its owners to what they might have previously thought of as just an organiser, especially as the user guide supplied with the Siena is far from comprehensive. I'm not so sure about the Series 3c guide, given the high detail in the original manual. Both guides would work well in a formal training situation, where they could form part of the material that attendees would use and take away after the course.

Steve Litchfield

Widget Guides

From: Widget Software and other major Psion dealers

Availability: now

Contact: Widget Software Ltd
Tel: (01438) 815444

Runs on: Series 3c or Siena

Supplied on: ring-bound book

Price: £24.95-3c/£19.95-Siena

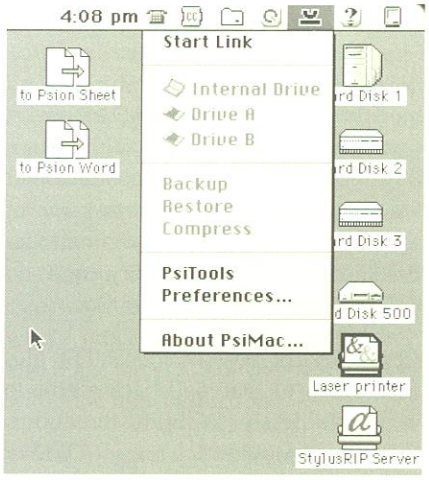
3c rating:

Siena rating:

PsiMac

Along with all other non-PC users, Apple Macintosh aficionados have been 'roughing it' with inferior software for some time now. Interestingly, a few years back, Mac users were actually *better off* than PC users: the Psion Link software offered drag-and-drop file transfer at a time when IBM compatibles had only the rather crude DOS-based RCOM and MCLINK software.

With the advent of PsiWin for the PC things took a drastic change. PC users suddenly had a graphical interface too, plus seamless file conversion both to and from Psion formats, a simple database program on the PC that allowed input of DATA records on the larger keyboard, and the ability to print *through* the PC, appending TrueType fonts to Psion documents on the way.



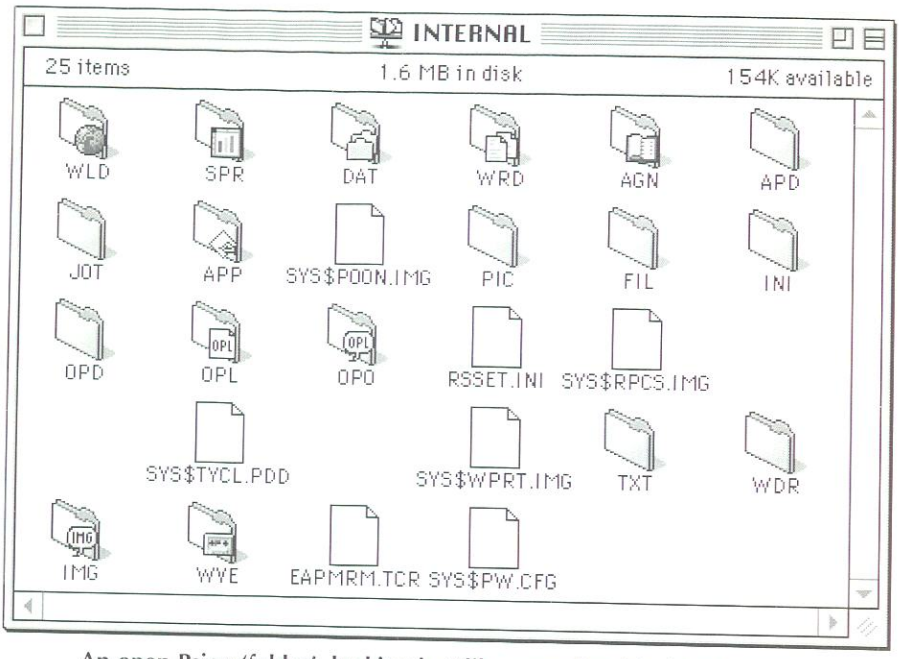
At last—a Psion icon on your Mac

Now, just following the release of the new Series 5 machine, Psion have finally got around to releasing a more up-to-date product for the Series 3a/3c and Siena, *PsiMac*. Series 5 users still have no support for Macintosh connections, not even a basic means to backup and restore their files. Psion have not released any firm details of *PsiMac 5* at this time, and although such a product may well be developed in the future there appears to be no timescale in place at present.

So, what does PsiMac offer to Series 3 and Siena users? To begin with it has the usual friendly Macintosh installation routine, loading the software from a couple of floppy disks in a few minutes. Once set up you just reboot your Mac, and PsiMac automatically loads a startup extension that scans your RS232/RS422 ports (the *Modem* and *Printer* connectors), for an attached Psion computer. I simply set this to continually scan both ports for the presence of a Psion, and it worked happily without ever upsetting other devices connected to the machine.

Auto detecting

Once your Macintosh detects a 3a/3c or Siena with its link switched on, you hear a *whooshing* sound to confirm that a successful connection has been made, and separate icons appear on your desktop for both the Psion itself and any SSDs that are present. Double-clicking



An open Psion 'folder', looking just like any other Macintosh folder

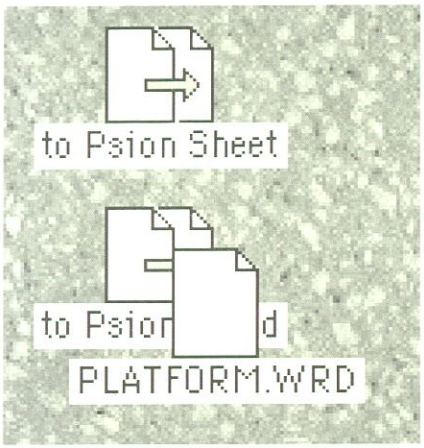
on an icon will open that 'folder' just as though it were on your own hard disk, and you can then freely drag files from folder to folder (regardless of whether they are on your Psion or your Mac) to your heart's content.

This gives a convenient way to perform basic file housekeeping tasks, but doesn't actually perform any type conversion on the files.

File conversions

PsiMac will convert your WORD and SHEET files both to and from all major Macintosh formats, but the big downfall of the program is that no other file convertors are present. There's no filter to exchange DATA files with Filemaker Pro, ClarisWorks, 4th Dimension, etc., no JOTTER conversion for the 3c, and most importantly no AGENDA conversion or synchronisation with Claris Organiser, Now Up to Date or any other Mac-based PIM, and no conversion of sound or PIC files. There's also no Mac-based database entry utility, and no facility to print through your Mac.

Conversion of WORD and SHEET files from Psion to Mac and back seems to work faultlessly in both directions. When you double-click on a WORD or SHEET file that has been dragged into a



A converted WORD file, ready to drag

Mac folder it will simply ask you to confirm what format you wish to convert it to, and then launch the relevant application and open the file immediately. Once you have defined your preferred Mac spreadsheet and word processor it won't even ask, it just opens the file without intervention.

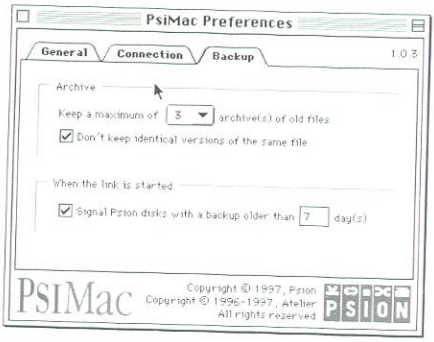
To convert from Mac formats into WORD or SHEET you need to drag your Psion file onto a desktop icon labelled 'to Psion Word' or 'to Psion Sheet', and it will convert the file to WRD or SPR format. An icon for the converted file will then appear on top of it, and from there you can drag it into the Psion directory (folder) of your choice. The whole process is completely effortless, and it just feels as though you're dealing with Mac files throughout.

When converting files between different computers certain data will always be lost, but this is entirely normal. Psion spreadsheets don't support borders, coloured highlights, etc., so this information is of course lost in the conversion. Likewise, tables created in Microsoft Word, ClarisWorks, etc. will be converted to simple tabbed text that Psion WORD can understand. The Series 3a and 3c don't support long file names either, so they are truncated to eight letters when transferring to the Psion.

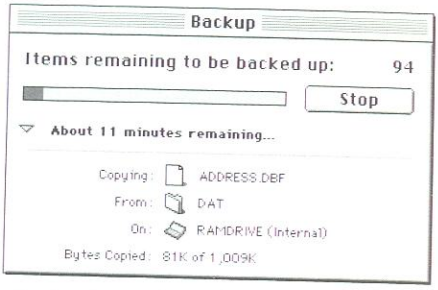
PsiMac currently converts between the following programs:

- ClarisWorks 1, 2, 3 and 4 (both spreadsheets and word processor documents).
- Microsoft Works 3 and 4 (both spreadsheets and word processor documents).
- Microsoft Word 4, 5, 5.1 and 6 documents.
- RTF text, raw ASCII text, and text with linebreaks.
- WordPerfect 2, 2.1, 3, 3.1 and 3.5 documents.
- Microsoft Excel 4 and 5 spreadsheets.
- Lotus 1-2-3 WK3, WK4 and WKS spreadsheets.

Note that PsiMac does not currently convert ClarisWorks 5 files, so you have to save them into an earlier version first.



Configuring backup reminders



Poetry in motion—backup in progress

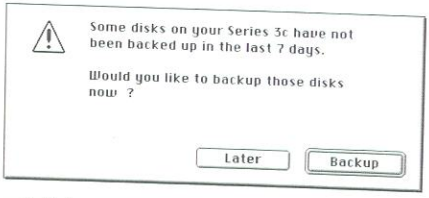
Backups

One area where PsiMac isn't lacking is in its ability to backup your Psion with maximum efficiency and minimum effort. You can request it to remind you whenever you connect to a Psion machine that has not been backed up for a given period, specified in days. Secondly, it closes down all running programs and files before running the backup. Thirdly it opens them back up again when it has finished.

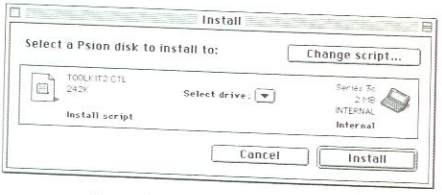
All files in backup archives are easily accessible with the usual drag-and-drop ease, and you can keep up to 9 archives for maximum security. If the unspeakable happens and your Psion crashes then it's just as easy to restore files from a backup, and you can also compress disks to regain space.

Easy installations

Almost all commercial 3a/3c programs supplied on floppy disk come with *PsiSetup*, an automated installation program that runs under Microsoft Windows. A useful utility in PsiMac performs the same function on your Apple, putting all the installation files into the correct Psion directories without user input. This is a welcome addition to the package and avoids the tedious manual installation previously forced upon Mac users.


Some disks on your Series 3c have not been backed up in the last 7 days.
Would you like to backup those disks now ?
Later
Backup

PsiMac even reminds you to backup



Installing new software

Conclusions

The basic product is beautifully executed, with a simple and very Mac-like interface that is a joy to use. The backup facility gets full marks, as does the installation, setup and general execution. With the addition of DATA and AGENDA conversion utilities I would have happily given this product four out of five marks, and with printing and database entry features would have offered a full five out of five. Sadly these two rather fundamental omissions tend to make PsiMac a partial disappointment for most users.

On the bright side all the conversion filters are simply plug-in modules, so if someone gets around to writing the missing ones then things will improve. With the appearance of the Series 5, I expect the flow of new Series 3 programs to gradually dry up, so the likelihood of such filters appearing seems rather slim at this late stage.

If you've been muddling along up until now using PsiWin under SoftWindows, SoftPC, or with a PC-compatibility card then PsiMac is less compelling. Only SoftPC supports the 57,600bps data transfer speed of PsiMac, but otherwise PsiMac offers few major benefits.

In summary, PsiMac is a well designed product that makes backup of a Series 3a, 3c or Siena easier than ever before. This alone makes it worthwhile for most Mac users, and if it encourages more frequent backups as a result then it may be worth its weight in gold if you ever lose your data. The WORD and SHEET filters are great if you transfer a lot of these files, but the missing DATA and AGENDA convertors prevent the truly seamless Psion-to-Macintosh linkup that we were all hoping for. In Psion's defence this is still far better Mac support than that offered by any of the Windows CE machines (i.e. *none*), or most other palmtops for that matter. On the other hand, for a mere £15 US Robotics *PalmPilot* users can purchase a link cable and full desktop equivalents of all the main programs built into the Pilot. This includes a PIM, to-do list manager, memo pad and address book. It makes the £80 for PsiMac look excessively expensive, though if you already have a cable you can buy the software alone for a more reasonable £29.95.

Steve Clack

PsiMac

From: All major Psion dealers

Availability: October 1997

Contact: n/a

Runs on: Series 3a/3c/Siena (Series 3a cable not supplied)

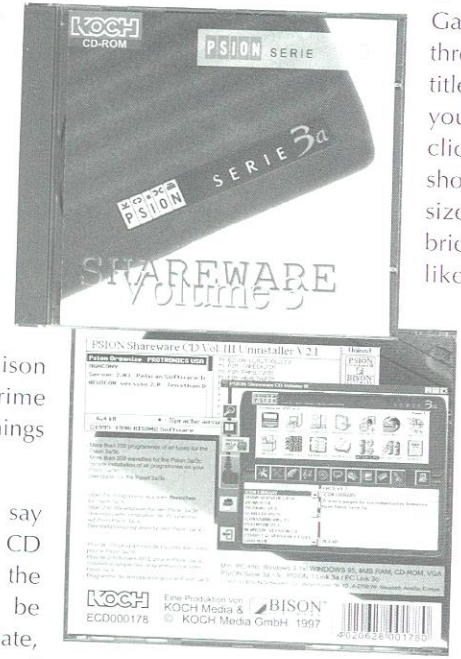
Supplied on: Mac floppy disk

Price: £79.95 with cable
£29.95 for software only

Rating:

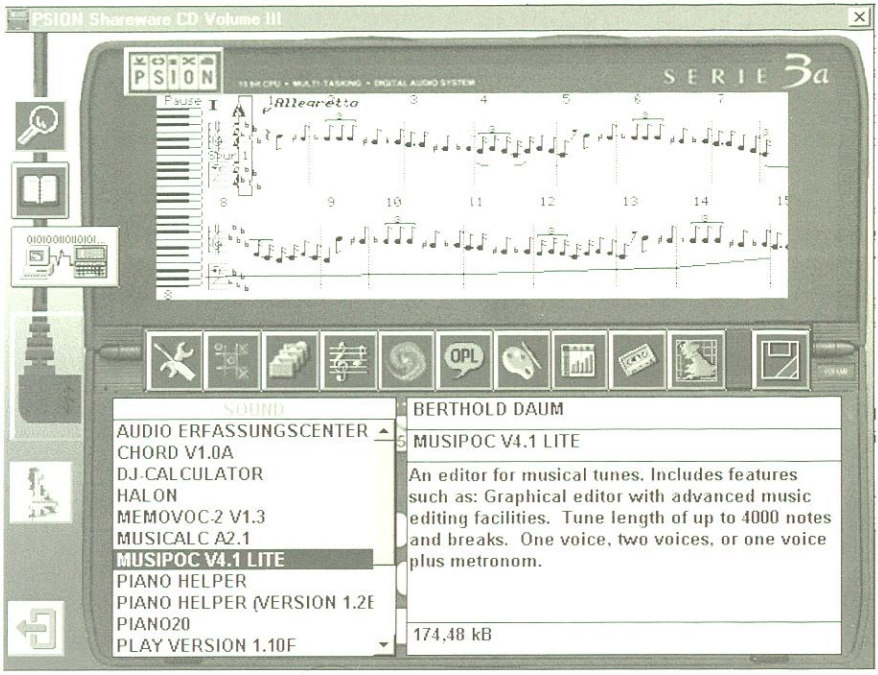
Koch CD-ROM volume 3

As regular Palmtop readers will know, there is an abundance of shareware available for our favourite handheld computers, and this software can be obtained from a variety of sources. When *Palmtop* first reviewed a CD-ROM shareware compilation we found it difficult to recommend this particular format as an easy and effective way of distributing material. That was over two years ago, and I'm pleased to say that things have moved on considerably since then. This latest CD, from Austrian distributors Bison Software, is a prime example of how things have advanced.



Whilst it's true to say that by the time a CD has been produced the material on it can be somewhat out-of-date, CD compilations of shareware still rate as an excellent way of browsing available programs. Installation of this particular disk is a breeze: after inserting the CD into your drive you select the language required, either English, French or German, and wait while the files are copied to your PC. Once this has been completed you may, like me, be pleasantly surprised to see the familiar face of a Series 3a pop up onto your screen.

The authors have very cunningly made use of the image of a Series 3a screen and touchbar to make viewing and accessing program information both simple and seamless. You select the category of product from options such as Business, Utilities or Games, and then scroll through a list of available titles. When one takes your fancy, a mouse-click pops up a screen-shot, the name and the size of the file, plus a brief description. If you like what you see, clicking on other screen icons will allow you to view the contents of any accompanying text files, then install the program straight onto your Psion. In practice, selecting to install your chosen package from the on-screen icon works very well, saves much messing about with ZIP files, and eliminates the sometimes daunting problems associated with installing shareware to the correct directories.



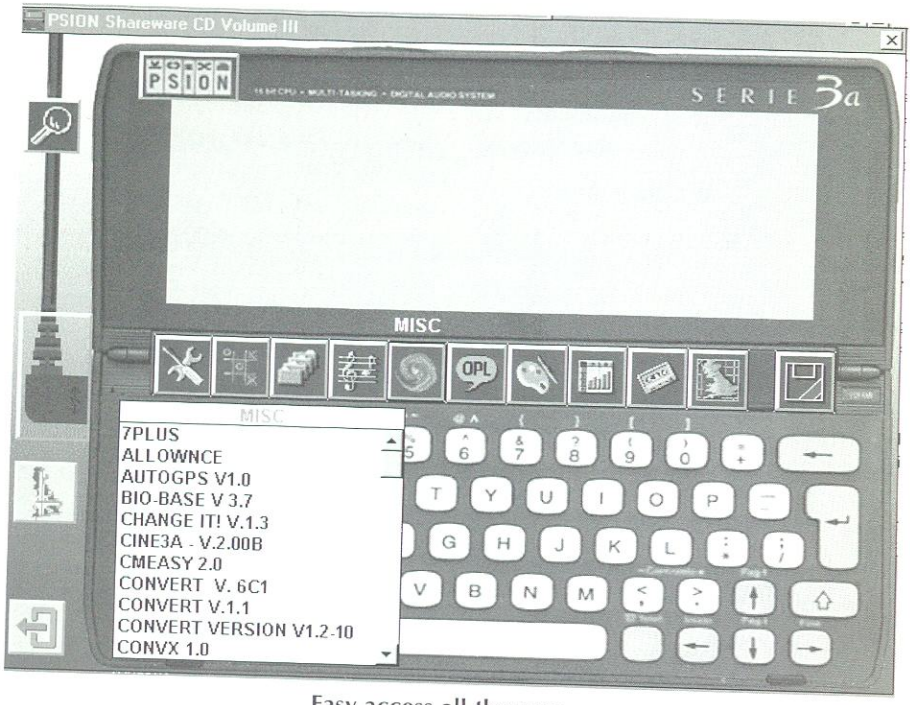
A familiar face—on your PC!

The program has a useful search option if you know what you're looking for, though most of us will prefer to browse through the hundreds of offerings to find out what best suits our needs.

The content is fairly comprehensive, and most of the top products are present. As an example of the number of programs at your fingertips the disk contains 146 business applications, 114 games and an impressive 243 WVE sound files, which you can even preview before loading onto your Psion.

The largest file on the disk made me smile. It's a movie, presumably put together by Psion as a marketing tool, which cites examples of the 3a's flexibility through world-renowned artistic masterpieces. Now that she owns a Series 3a, 'Whistler's Mother' can access her family's details from DATA, so she can see much more of her offspring. Apparently, the zoom function is great for her failing eyesight too! There are versions of this epic in English, German and French. Each one is around 115MB and lasts 9 minutes.

Psion Shareware CD Volume 3 is a very impressive compilation. It's easy to navigate, caters for users of the Series 3 family as well as the Siena, and has a



Easy access all the way...

healthy mix of programs for most people's needs. The only real drawback is that the disk was mastered in March 1997, so many of the featured programs are a little out-of-date. In the world of shareware, packages tend to be superseded on a regular basis. If you want to have the latest version of a program at your fingertips then the Internet is still your best bet, but for browsing and experimenting, this disk is hard to beat.

You'll currently need to check with Bison directly in Austria for availability.

Pete Sipple

Koch CD-ROM

From: Bison Software

Availability: now

Contact: Bison Software
tel: +43 2622 66534 (Austria)
E-mail: psioncd@bison.co.at

Runs on: Minimum 486 PC with 8MB RAM/Win 3.1 or 95/VGA

Supplied on: CD-ROM

Price: 498 Austrian Schillings (around £23)

Rating:

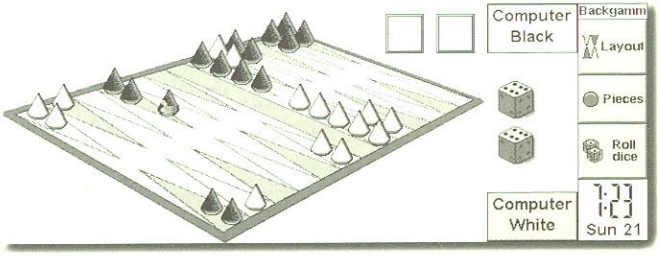
Backgammon and Chinese Chess

Back in issue 7 I was asked to review Purple Software's new games package for the 3a/3c, and was very impressed by the quality of both Backgammon and Chinese Chess. With the advent of the Series 5, Purple have re-written both of these and I am pleased to report that they have done an excellent job. The games are visually very impressive, gameplay is easy, and the options available to the user add a vast amount of flexibility.

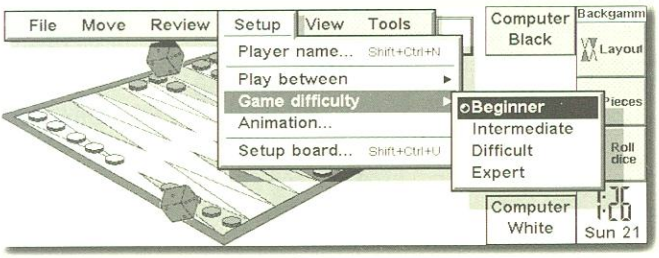
BACKGAMMON, as I have mentioned in a previous review, is a game that I have enjoyed playing for many years, so I'm pleased that I can now play it on my new Series 5. The implementation on the 3a/3c version was excellent, and is even better on the 5. The game has four levels of difficulty, and to say that the computer is 'cunning' when set to expert level is an understatement. The program now uses a new 'engine' licensed from EMCC software, and the stronger gameplay is quite evident.

Those familiar with Backgammon will know that the object is to move your fifteen pieces around the board into your 'home' area, then removing them before your opponent removes their own. The 5's pen input makes playing the game a delight, as you can click and drag your piece to move them. The play also seems remarkably quick when compared to the 3c version.

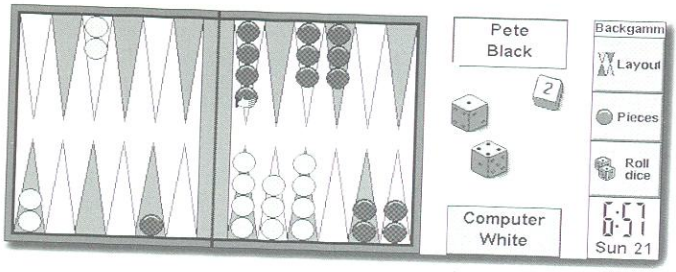
CHINESE CHESS is a game that I have yet to master. I have a basic under-



One of the 3D view options, with easy-to-see conical playing pieces



Four selectable difficulty levels, with animated dice bouncing around in the background

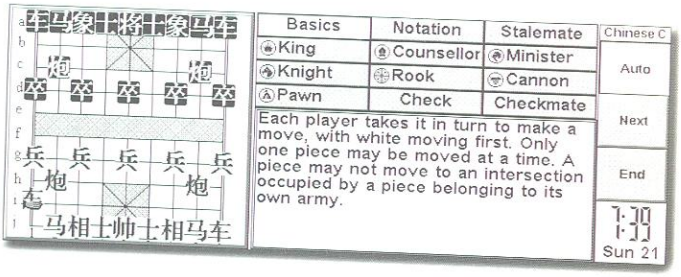


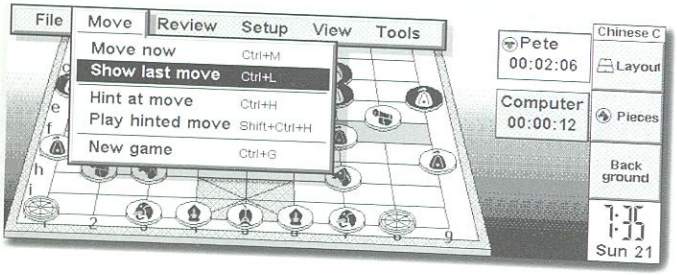
A more conventional two-dimensional playing board—yet another setup option

standing of the rules and objectives, but I lack the patience to become a serious player. The rules are not dissimilar to regular chess, but the pieces behave in a different way, which is confusing at first, especially as the pieces get more powerful when they cross into the opponent's half of the board. The 5 version has six levels of difficulty and a host of options and views to play with. One view allows you to track movements of your pieces, so that you can check back on your past moves, and you can switch from Western pieces to Chinese notations at will. When reviewing the Series 3c version I reported that the game was a little slow—I'm pleased to report that whilst the game is no easier to master, it *is* now easier to learn and faster to play.

Both games have many similarities now. You can save either one at any point and replay it at will, you can change from 2D to 3D view, as well as swap 'colours' at any point. Both games will allow you

The games both come with effective tutorials to help get the novice started





Chinese Chess. One of the many selectable board layouts and backgrounds

to play the computer, try a two player game, or sit back and watch the computer challenge itself to get a feel for the strategies used.

Extra emphasis has been given to the beginner this time, and both games come with a very effective tutorial and the ability to request a hint at any point. You may also retract your previous move to try something different, and set the computer to help by displaying threatened pieces and available moves.

If you like either of these two games then this purchase is a must, and full marks go to Purple for making the games so playable. The click 'n' drag has been very well implemented, especially on Backgammon, and there's almost no waiting time for the computer to think about its move. As mentioned before, the tutorials are well written, and the views are flexible, customisable, and very impressive.

Pete Sipple

Backgammon/Chinese Chess

From: All major Psion dealers

Availability: October 1997

Contact: Purple Software Ltd
Tel: 0171 3877777

Runs on: Series 5

Supplied on: 3.5" floppy disk

Price: £49.95 including VAT

Rating:

Chomper

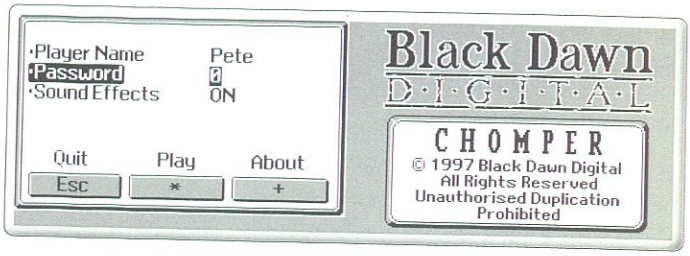
While I was compiling *Shareware Shorts for* this issue, I stumbled across Paul Williams' shareware version of the classic 'Pac-Man' game. "I'm surprised no-one's thought of this before", I said to myself. It seems like someone else has, in this case *Black Dawn Digital*.

Chomper is fairly true to the original arcade game, where you have to rush around the playing field eating small pellets before the monsters eat *you*. If you gobble a 'magic star' you can get your revenge and munch the monsters back. As a bonus, a mystery prize icon pops up occasionally, which can bring you an extra life, slow down the monsters or reward you 500 points. Be warned though, eating the wrong icon can slow you down or kill your Chomper dead in its tracks.

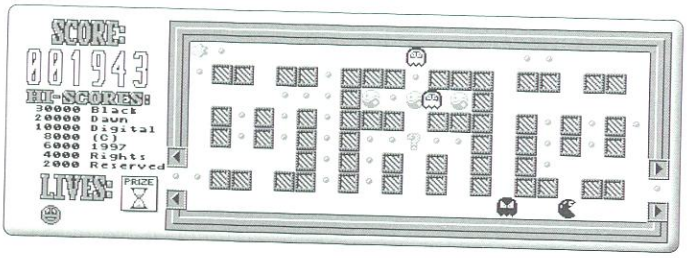
Installation is easy, using either the now standard PsiSetup program, or by copying the files into the appropriate directory. The manual explains this procedure well.

Gameplay is very straightforward, although I found the game a little unresponsive to keypresses every now and then, especially the 'up' and 'down' controls. I also found it necessary to turn my Psion's contrast up to near maximum so that I could clearly see the grey pellets.

The program contains no online help (not that you really need it with such



Prepare to chomp



Chomping away!

simple rules), and pressing <Menu> doesn't bring up a menu, but just pauses the game, which is perhaps a little basic.

There are twelve levels to keep you amused, and a nice touch is that before each level is played you're presented with a password which you can write down to enable you to go straight back to that level next time. Sound effects fans will be pleased to hear a reassuring 'waka waka' chomping noise as the pellets are eaten, plus other beeps and fanfares scattered throughout.

All in all Chomper's not a bad game, but is more likely to appeal for its novelty value rather than long term playability.

Chomper requires 57K of memory space and a further 77K of system memory to run. The eight-page manual warns you that this program can only be run from the internal drive of your machine, as the graphics aren't smooth enough when run from an SSD.

Pete Sipple

Chomper

From: Widget Software

Availability: October 1997

Contact: 01438 815444

Runs on: Series 3a/3c

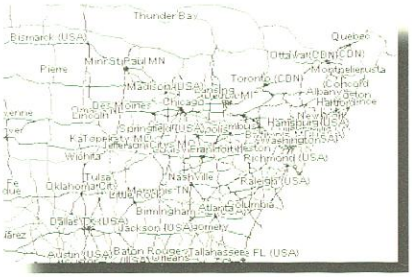
Supplied on: 3.5" floppy disk

Price: £TBA

Rating:

Finding your way

A little Psion can be a huge boon when trying to navigate your way around. We take a look at the mass of software available for the Series 3a/3c, Siena and Series 5, and look at their various strengths and weaknesses.



En Route USA/Canada/Mexico

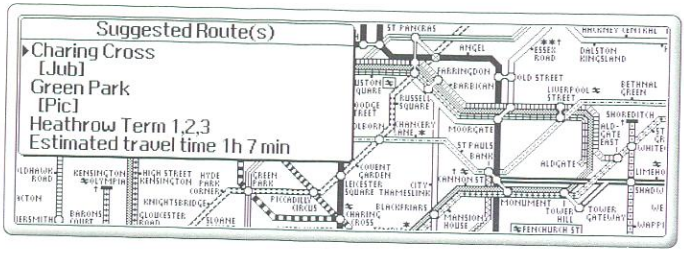
by Alain Monasse

I have to confess. **All group tests I've seen in the past have laid out the merits of the contenders in great detail before deciding on a winner after long and careful deliberation. In this case, I know *exactly* which software will come out on top, as it's the best tool for the job for at least 70% of Psion users. To preserve *some* air of mystery however, I'll arrive at my conclusion via a roundabout look at the competition in what is now a fast-growing marketplace.**

Surely everyone needs access to a map at some stage in their daily life? The idea of being able to carry a suitable plan inside your trusty Psion palmtop computer is irresistible to most owners. In fact, there are two general categories to consider: route-finding software and Geographical Information Systems (GIS). The former category attempts to compile a tabular list of driving instructions between two or more places ('travel 4km North on Route 66, take exit 17 West', and so on) and then to plot these instructions on an on-screen road map. GIS software can be thought of as a giant database where geographical data can be displayed and navigated graphically, but it displays maps without the accompanying table of 'where to go' instructions.

As a Frenchman who often commutes around Europe (and especially into the UK) on business, the fairly recent arrival of most of this software has been a tremendous boon.

Psion is of course a British company, and a very large number of *Palmtop*



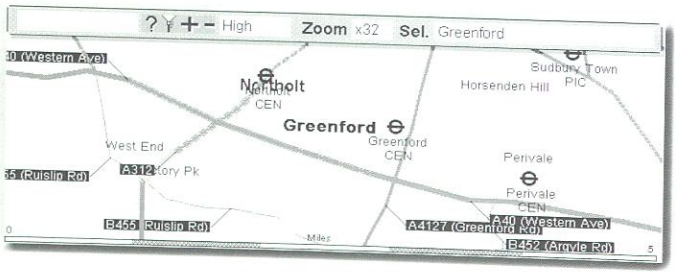
TUBE on the Series 3. Negotiate the labyrinthine London Underground—electronically!

readers live in Great Britain, so let's start there, near the company's headquarters.

Around London

Tube (by SW Systems—**reviewed in issue 6-Ed.**) is a route finder for the tortuous London Underground system. It works well (on the Siena and Series 3) and even includes an onscreen tube map licensed from London Underground. More integration between the map screen and the written route instructions would have been welcome, as would more general London information within the program. Tube is a commercial program, available on floppy disk or SSD. If you'd like to try a freeware alternative on the same platform, *Subway* (by Tat Tang) offers text-based route finding to the same standard and seems to work just as well.

Staying in London, *Psi-Mapper/London* (shareware, by Steve Litchfield) is a GIS that offers the whole of Greater London down to 'B' road level on the Series 3 and Series 5. As we'll see later, the strength of Steve's shareware lies very much in the wide variety of overlays available, ranging in this case from police stations to pizza restaurants and from tube stations to hospitals. Although it's shareware, it is fully working—so you can evaluate it before paying a penny (or franc!) Also covering the capital in detail on the 3a/3c is the commercial *Nicholson London Pages* (by Mobile Software—**reviewed in issue 9-Ed.**), which although not a mapping program in itself, contains thousands of useful entries, each grid-coded to locations on supplied paper maps.

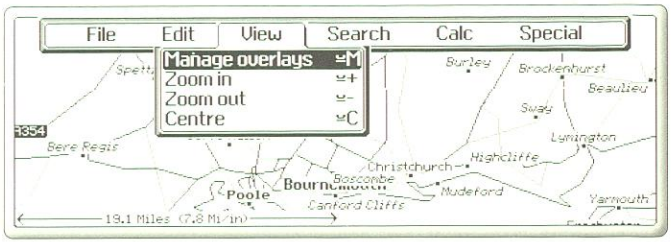


Psi-Mapper/London—Steve Litchfield's latest mapping creation

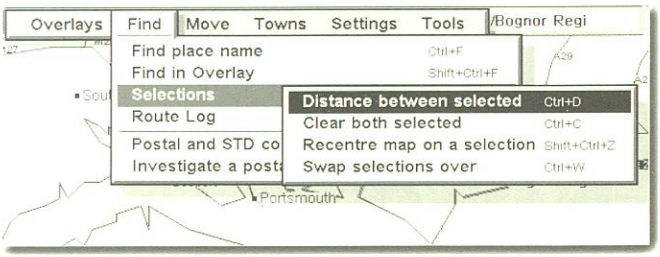
Within the UK and Ireland

Moving out into the rest of the country, the commercial *Geographical Database* (by Fawnbench) is now available for the 3c and is a full GIS with 20,000 places, a good set of high-resolution road maps and a few basic overlays, including heliports, railway stations and motorway junctions. I was impressed by the handling of all the display 'layers' (both supplied and user-created) and the intelligent scrolling, though less so by the program's rather slow operating speed and the lack of integration between the built-in functions. A version is promised for the Series 5 in the future.

Also covering Great Britain is *Psi-Mapper/GB* (by Steve Litchfield—**reviewed in issue 4-Ed.**), *le grand-père* of Psion GIS programs. The town and road database is crude compared to the other programs evaluated here, and you will need to keep a paper road atlas to hand as well. Map drawing speed is just adequate on the Siena and Series 3c, but a lot faster on the speedy Series 5. The program's strength lies in the staggering variety of overlays (around 100) and town plans (around 300) included. Items as specialist as amateur radio repeaters, prehistoric 'barrows' or steam railways are commonplace in Psi-Mapper's world. The Series 5 version uses the touch-screen well, even to the extent of being able to annotate a map by writing directly on it. Steve's made the program fully-working even when unregistered, a friendly approach which is very endearing. He also has a companion program for Ireland.



'Geographical Database' by Fawnbench. Good detail in the UK, but rather slow



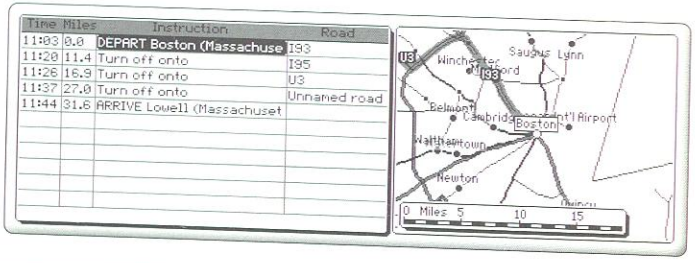
Psi-Mapper GB on the Series 5

Accurate route planning

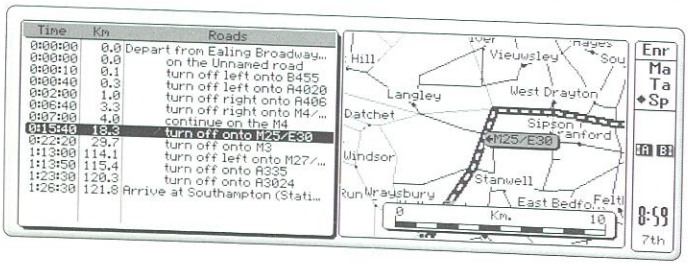
Useful as they are, neither of the above packages can actually tell you how to get from place to place, and for that we need to look at route finding software. *Autoroute Express* (by Microsoft) for the Series 3 range has been available for over two years. Alas, the road data it uses is quite a bit older than that, which reduces its usefulness in most parts of the country, as roads are of course always being changed. With the advent of the Windows CE machines Microsoft will not be producing any more updates for the Psion range, so the lifetime of this product is nearing its end. Its main redeeming feature is that its sister program, *Automap Road Atlas*, maps out the USA and Canada on a 3a/3c.

The good news is that there is now a direct replacement in the form of *En Route* (by Palmtop BV, no relation to *Palmtop Publications*), recently released for the 3a/3c and Series 5. The programmers seem to have taken many of the best features from the other software mentioned above and put them all together into one slick package. Like Autoroute, it finds optimum routes and calculates journey details. Like Geographical Database, it has a detailed and up-to-date road database, and allows for the creation and display of additional overlays. Like Psi-Mapper, it is available for several different countries and for both Series 3a/3c and 5 machines. There aren't many overlays currently available, but at least the functionality is there for the future.

Even the description above doesn't really do justice to the Series 5 version of En Route, which is something quite special. Remember that the CompactFlash disks for the 5 range are very cheap compared to the old SSDs,



Automap Road Atlas, Autoroute Express' companion product for the USA and Canada

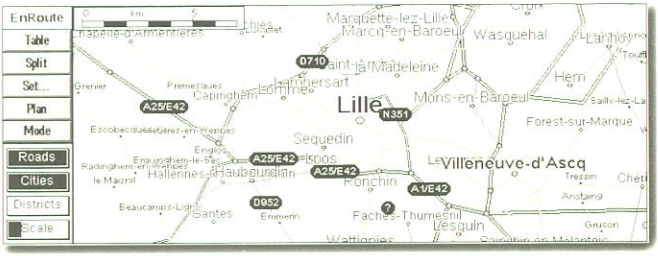


En Route for the Series 3a/3c

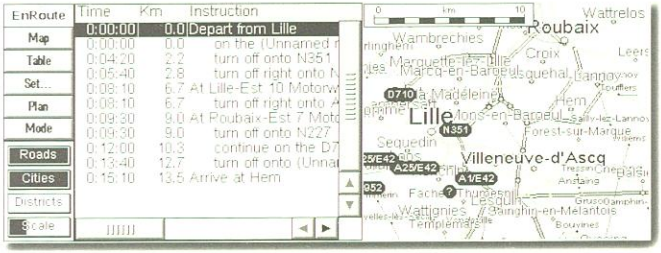
which gives software producers a lot more room for manoeuvre. En Route comes on CD in two versions: Europe (including 17 countries, with several alternative installations offering different levels of detail), and USA/Canada/Mexico, and a Windows 95-hosted 'wizard' leads you through the task of installing all the components required. At the highest level of detail for Great Britain there are several megabytes of data, which is enough to take the user to local road level across the whole country. Even main roads through housing estates are included, if you can afford the Psion disk space. On the older Series 3c En Route isn't terribly quick, so here again the extra speed of the Series 5 processor comes in handy when crunching routes and drawing maps.

The whole of Europe

En Route Europe for the Series 5 has individual maps for Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Eire, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK.



En Route on the 5. Showing a map view at high resolution



The same area as above, but with a 'split' view to show the map and route instructions together

It also offers slightly lower resolution group maps of Austria/Switzerland/Italy, Belgium/Netherlands/Luxembourg, Eastern Europe, Europe, Scandinavia, Spain/Portugal, UK and Eire, and Western Europe. These multi-country maps allow you to plan routes *between* countries, which the individual country maps will not.

On the 3a/3c version of En Route, you don't get the 17 countries included in the Series 5 version, but have to

purchase either France/Switzerland, Benelux, Germany/Austria or UK/Ireland on separate SSDs.

Being supplied on CD rather than SSD, the Series 5 versions of En Route work out a lot cheaper than the Series 3 ones. The European version is particularly good value for money, as it's really 17 countries for the price of one!

En Route works well as a route-finder, with good clear instructions. There are numerous options for viewing the journey table and/or map, and all tastes are catered for. As with Autoroute it's impressive to be able to step through a calculated route junction-by-junction in split-screen mode, with the map window exactly following your progress through the table. Good use is made of the Series 5 touch-screen, and tapping on or near a displayed road will pop up its name. Instructions are even calculated across ferry routes, so you can journey between Grantham and Genoa without a hitch! Support for my home country of France is very good too, with up to three megabytes of detailed information on the Series 5.

North America too...

En Route USA/Canada/Mexico understandably has a little less road detail than its European equivalent, as it covers an area of over eight million square miles. It is still immensely useful though, and covers all but the smallest roads and towns.

Multi-lingual

En Route is truly international in every respect, and you can choose to have menu options appear in English, Italian, German, Dutch or French.

Other software

There are several other (shareware) sources of general mapping information in the form of *GeoDIS* (by Rolf Aeschbacher) and *Psi-Mapper/France*, both GISs for the '3'. The former offers very basic boundary and town mapping across not only France, but also several other countries. The latter has all the usual Psi-Mapper functions together with a surprising number of France-specific overlays and some town plans.

If your interest is mainly Paris, *MetroRER* for the 3a/3c offers text-based route-finding round the city's train network, similar to Tube and Subway, though to a lesser sophistication.

The last word

If you live in Europe you have absolutely no excuse for getting lost ever again, with En Route being the software to die for. If you live in another European country, just ask for a copy of En Route and don't look back. If you live in North America, it's worth upgrading to a 5 simply to be able to run En Route, it really is *that* good.

Product	Version	Sold as	Price(s)	Compatibility	Rating
Tube	1.04	commercial	£32 on diskette, £37 on SSD	3a/3c/Siena	
Subway	1.0A	freeware	FREE	3a/3c/Siena	
Psi-Mapper London	2.1	shareware	£14	3a/3c/Series 5	
Nicholson London Pages	n/a	commercial	£20	3a/3c	N/A
Geographical Database	1.5	commercial	£34 on diskette, £60 on SSD	3a/3c	
Psi-Mapper GB	5.3	shareware	£14	3a/3c/Siena Series 5	
Psi-Mapper Ireland	2.0	shareware	£9	3a/3c	
Autoroute Express	1.00	commercial	£65	3a/3c	
Automap Road Atlas	1.00	commercial	US$95 approx.	3a/3c	
En Route (Europe or US/Can/Mex.)	1.00	commercial	£50 on CD for S5 £70 on S3 SSD	3a/3c/Series 5	
GeoDIS	1.06	shareware	£15	3a/3c	
Psi-Mapper France	1.1	shareware	£14 or 120 francs	3a/3c	
MetroRER	1.1c	shareware	150 francs	3a/3c	

A refresher course in GPS

Once upon a time, *Global Positioning System* units were rare, expensive and difficult to hook up. Clever gadgets that they are, a GPS will scan the sky for special satellite signals and then deduce your current position on the earth's surface to an accuracy of around 20 metres. Progress can be recorded through sets of 'waypoints' (places you've marked specially) and 'tracklogs' (automatic recording of recent movements). They've become so cheap and ubiquitous that all the road mapping packages mentioned in this article support GPS to some extent.

En Route and Geographical Database will both show a cross-hair or marker on the main map screen which constantly updates to show your position (the so-called 'Moving Map'). The Psi-Mapper programs go one better by showing position *and* distance to (or estimated time of arrival at) your destination in real time.

Other more dedicated GPS utilities exist for the Series 3a/3c. For example, the excellent *PsiGar*, which allows your Psion to become a repository and cataloguer of GPS tracklogs and waypoint information. *AutoGPS* is a freeware add-on to the old Autoroute Express to give it moving map capability. For pilots there are numerous specialist GPS-based flying aids available.

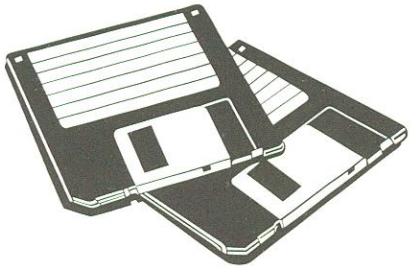
A word of warning, though. Computers of any kind don't like strange signals inserted into their serial ports, and have a tendency to get confused (even the ultra-reliable Psions), so do please backup your files before tinkering with GPS units and wiring looms. For more information on GPS systems see the article 'Where the heck are we?' in issue 9 of *Palmtop*.

Availability

Please check the Software Directory starting on page 99 for further details of the shareware programs mentioned in this article. The commercial programs are all available from major Psion dealers.

The Installation game

In the first instalment of a two part article, Patrick Bell talks about files and directory structures and looks at how to install software onto your Series 3a, 3c or Siena



Computers (including Psions) are made from chips and circuits, but it is the *programs* on them that give them their power, and to run programs you need *files*. Unlike most desktop computers, Psions come with a selection of programs already on them. These are preloaded onto a ROM (Read Only Memory) chip and cannot be deleted or moved, but any additional programs or files required must be somehow loaded onto the Psion.

Every single chunk of data within a computer is referred to as a file, although many people may traditionally think of a 'file' as a word processor document, spreadsheet, etc. Even programs (the additional software you buy to run on your machine) consist of one or more files, and in order for these to operate correctly the computer needs to find them. This in turn requires us, the poor humble user, to place these files in the correct place so it knows where to look.

We therefore come to the most common question sent in to *Palmtop*, "How do I load files onto the Psion?"

To answer this I will attempt to explain the fundamentals of directory structures in general, and more specifically how they are implemented on the Psion.

On a PC, a 'disk' is quite literally a round piece of magnetic material. It is similar in concept to a spinning vinyl record, with the information laid down in a spiral track. The media is actually magnetic like a cassette tape and the data is stored digitally, as a series of ones and zeros. On a Psion the 'disk' doesn't move at all, but is simply a collection of microchips.

Although storage media may work differently on different computers, the

Psions actually use the same basic file structure as PCs, and the same hierarchical directory structure as almost every kind of personal computer.

What are directories?

All files are stored in directories. The main reason for this is to avoid the mayhem that would ensue if all files were simply lumped together into a single place. Imagine going to a library, only to find that instead of being neatly categorised on shelves, all the books were just piled into a big disorganised heap on the floor. Placing related files into appropriate *directories* brings law and order to your computer by putting all of your main program files into one compartment, all of your sound files into another, spreadsheets into yet another, and so on.

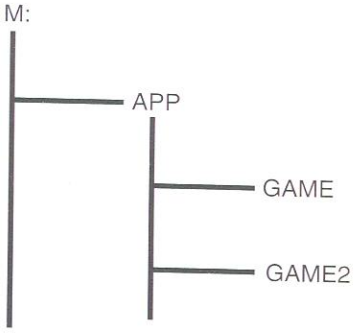
Building a tree

The best analogy to use when describing directory structures is that of a family tree. For example, the directory *path* M:\APP\GAME is related to the family tree as follows:

- 'M:' is standard Psion-speak to refer to the internal drive of a 3a/3c or Siena (on the Series 5 this has been renamed to 'C:', which is the same designation normally given to a PC's main internal hard disk). If the first bit of a Series 3 directory path is either 'A:' or 'B:' then it is referring to a location on one of the two built-in SSD slots. Likewise the designation 'D:' is used to refer to the Series 5's single CompactFlash slot.
- The first backslash ('\') after the drive designation refers to the parent or *root* directory. Thus any file stored in the 'M:\' directory would be at the very top (first) level of the family tree.
- 'APP' is a child (a subdirectory) of the root directory, and 'GAME' is a grandchild (a further subdirectory) of 'M:' and a child of 'APP'.

If the 'GAME' directory were to house a program file called GAMEPROG.OPA, then the full directory path would be 'M:\APP\GAME\GAMEPROG.OPA'. Don't forget that there must always be a backslash between each level of the tree, and before the filename that you are referring to.

More generations down the family tree would follow the same notation of an



additional '\' followed by the directory name for each new generation—each backslash can be imagined as the marker used to distinguish one generation from the next.

The word 'directory' is used to describe each branch of the tree, and each directory is used to locate a group of files and/or directories.

Some guidelines

On the Psion 3 it is traditional, although by no means standard, to place the main APP or OPA program file into the '\APP' directory, and other related files for the program are often placed in a further subdirectory located below it.

In the terms used above this would mean creating another directory, off the APP branch, to contain the program files. This directory would usually be given a name related to the files it contained, i.e. the program files for GAMEPROG would all be placed into the location 'M:\APP\GAME\'.

As with all directories the '\APP' directory itself may contain a mixture of files and further subdirectories.

As mentioned above, program files aren't *always* placed using the convention we have outlined. Shareware programs usually include a file named README.TXT or something similar, and these normally contain details of which files to put where. Always follow these instructions *to the letter*, as putting even a single file into either the wrong directory or one that has been incorrectly named will invariably result in failure.

Handling ZIPs

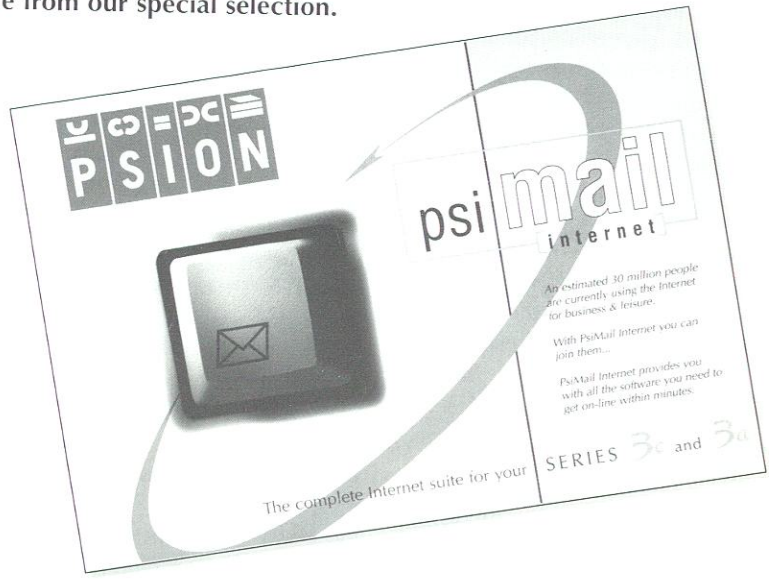
Commercial software is normally supplied with all the files ready to copy, and they often appear in correct directories too, so you can simply copy the entire directory structure from your desktop computer.

Most shareware programs for the Psions are supplied in ZIP format (a single file ending in '.ZIP', and containing all the program files within). If the ZIP file has been thoughtfully created by the author then the required location of the files will have been stored alongside the file names. All programs supplied by myself (LOTTO3A, DataImp), Steve Litchfield (MAPPER, etc.) and many others are created in this way. If you have a PC and use WINZIP, the Windows-based un-ZIPper, then these locations are easily viewed. If you are using PKZIP on a PC then typing the command line PKUNZIP -VB GAME.ZIP will also display all the files within the ZIP file (in this case GAME.ZIP) and their locations.

In the next instalment we'll discuss how to perform the necessary copying operations on your Psion, and how to get the program up and running when you've got it there.

WIN a copy of PsiMail Internet!

Just answer the following questions relating to the contents of this issue, and mail your answers to the usual *Palmtop* address. One correct entry picked out at random on 10th November will receive the prize. If you don't want PsiMail Internet then you can choose another prize of equivalent value from our special selection.


PSION
psi mail
internet
An estimated 30 million people are currently using the Internet for business & leisure.
With PsiMail Internet you can join them...
PsiMail Internet provides you with all the software you need to get on-line within minutes.
The complete Internet suite for your SERIES 3c and 3a

Question 1 - How many countries does the European En Route include?

Question 2 - How many Series 5s per month do Psion hope to produce?

Question 3 - What popular arcade game has recently appeared for the Series 3 in both commercial and shareware variants?

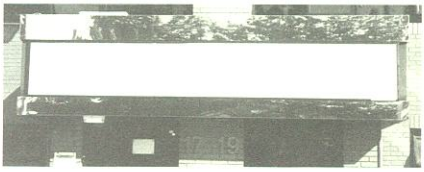
Last issue's competition winner was Derek Coxhead of Weybridge, Surrey

The competition answers were: four, 194,600 (695x280), and ~1200miles/1800km.

The inside story...

Psion were recently kind enough to offer *Palmtop* magazine a guided tour around their main manufacturing facility. With our own words and photos we take *you* on the same tour...

by Steve Clack

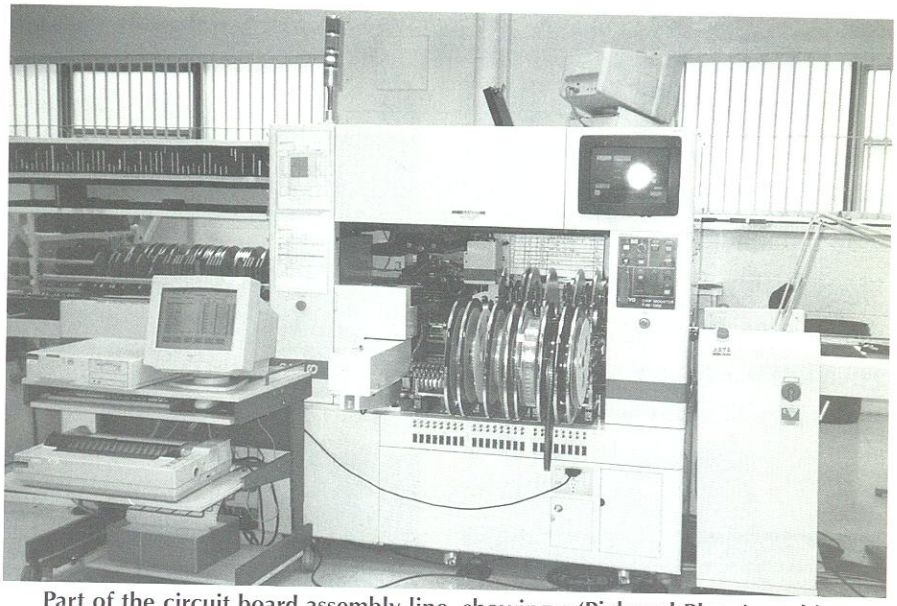


The 41,000 square foot factory at Greenford, 10 miles to the west of Central London is where all of Psion's Series 5, Series 3c and Siena machines are produced. Although some of the main circuit boards are constructed by external sub-contractors at peak times, 100% of the final assembly and testing work is done here, together with the assembly and packaging of many peripherals such as PsiWin, AC power adaptors, and so on.

Circuit boards

Approximately one third of the factory area is devoted to producing the main circuit board that forms the backbone of every Psion computer. This single board contains 200-400 components, all tiny 'surface mount' devices, plus the main CPU (the 'brains' of the machine), and the ROM(s) (Read Only Memory) that contain the built-in software applications that appear every time you switch on your Psion.

The majority of this section is taken up by three production lines, currently two

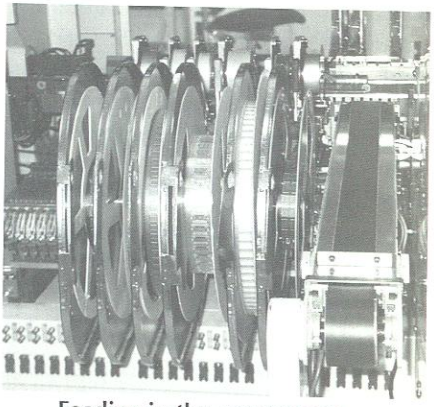


Part of the circuit board assembly line, showing a 'Pick and Place' machine

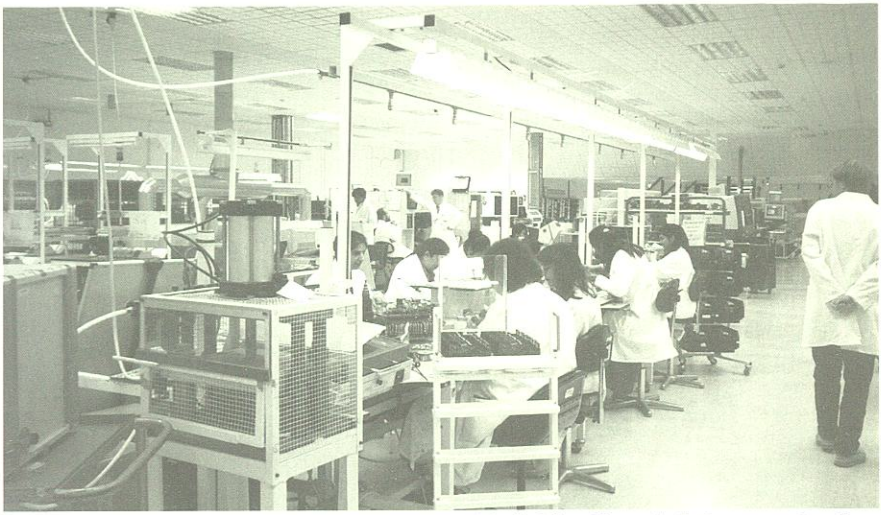
for the Series 5 and one for the Series 3c/Siena. Note that mainstream Series 3a production has now stopped, and the 3c 'range' now comprises only the 2MB backlit machine.

Pick and Place

The initially empty PCBs (Printed Circuit Boards) are fed down a mechanical conveyor into a machine that coats the pre-etched solder tracks with a thick solder 'paste'. Further down the line, sophisticated 'Pick and Place' machines then grab the tiny components (mostly just a few millimetres across), one at a time, and accurately place them onto the board at a rate of up to 10 components per second. The larger machines have up to 18 'turrets' simultaneously grabbing chips and placing each of them with an accuracy within hundredths of a millimetre.



Feeding in the components...



Part of the circuit board assembly line, with finished boards being examined

The individual components are fed into the machine from spools, just like tape recorder reels. These allow large numbers of items to be fed in quickly, and to be replenished rapidly whenever they run out.

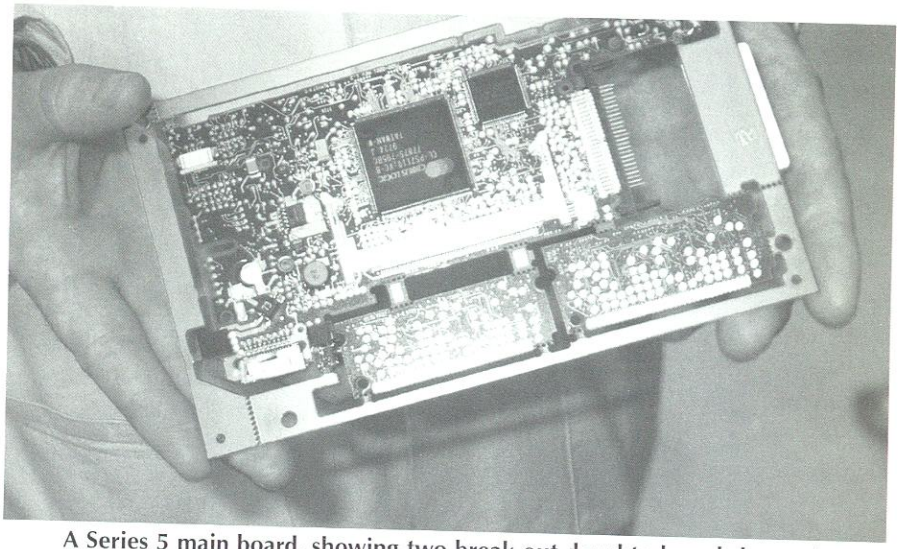
These machines form a large part of Psion's investment in the factory, and at something approaching a million pounds each they must be kept working as many hours as possible. To this end the pick and place lines are normally in operation 24 hours a day, with Psion's own in-house maintenance team on site to handle all but the most catastrophic system failure.

Next the boards are passed through precisely regulated ovens that heat the solder until it becomes hot enough for the solder to 'flow' between the components.

The end of the line

The conveyor finally takes the now cooling boards to a collection point at the end of the line, where every one goes through a visual inspection and an intensive 30 second automated electrical test of the 2000 or so joints.

At the end of this production stage the circuit boards will have all the components flow-soldered onto *both* sides, with the basic electrical functionality tests completed. In the case of the Series 5 this main board includes a break-out section containing the system ROMs. During the final assembly phase this section of the board is literally 'broken off' the main PCB, where the ROM 'daughter board' slides into its own socket on the main assembly. This means that all Series 5 ROMs have the



A Series 5 main board, showing two break-out daughterboards beneath

ability to be factory upgraded at a later date.

Final assembly

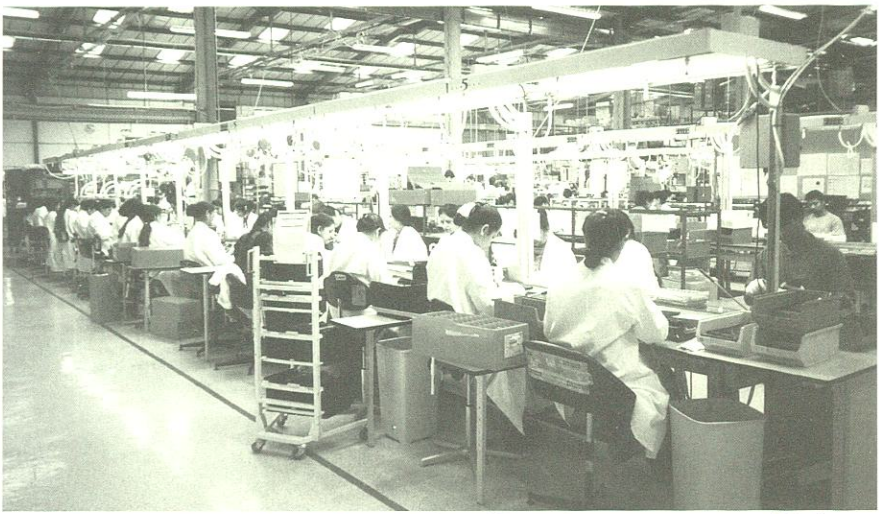
The other two thirds of the factory is taken up by the final assembly area. Here, the finished circuit boards are attached to all the other parts that go to make up a finished computer: the screen, keyboard, battery compartment components, infrared eye, RS232 port, loudspeaker, casing, etc.

This part of the factory works normal shift hours, and is now devoted at least two thirds to Series 5 assembly. The three main assembly lines account for the majority of the factory's 360 strong workforce, and the lines all have the capability to be switched from 3c to Series 5 to Siena production as the marketplace demands. Production also switches from UK-specification machines to any other of the international variants (such as US, German, French, Dutch, etc.) as required.

Each of the lines comprises a small central loop conveyor belt that slowly carries the partially completed machines down a double line of assembly technicians who each add a couple of components, plug in a screen, add a battery holder and so on.

Blank keyboards!

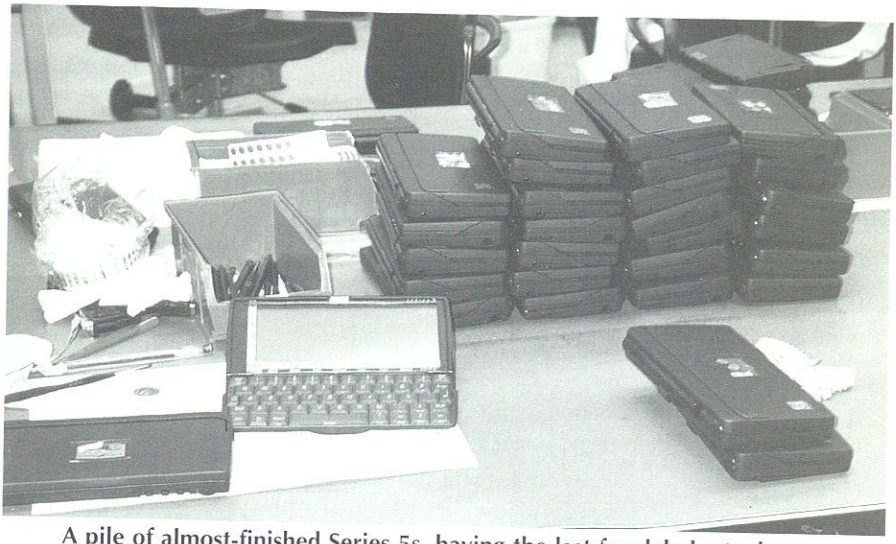
Psion have a clever home-built machine to pick up all the tiny plastic Series 5 keys and place them into the correct positions over the rubber-like moulded



The main assembly line, where all the additional components are added

membrane that gives the Series 5 keyboard its super responsive feel. At this stage all the keys are still *blank*—the last part of the keyboard sub-assembly process is to place the keyboards one-at-a-time into a small shielded box, where a laser marker quite literally 'writes' the letters onto the blank buttons. Psion claim that this method is more appropriate than moulding the

Partially assembled Series 5s being fed down the conveyor from right to left



A pile of almost-finished Series 5s, having the last few labels stuck on...

legends directly into the keys. These don't appear to 'rub off' like the Series 3 keys, but do tend to fade as they become dirty during normal use.

Towards the end of the line each almost-finished machine is placed onto a semi-automated test rig where every major item of functionality is tested. On the Series 5 production line this includes placing an overlay on the screen to check the accuracy of the digitizer (which registers presses of the touch-sensitive screen), checking power input through both batteries and the AC power socket, checking communications through both the physical RS232 and IrDA infrared ports, plus a number of keyboard input tests and basic computing tasks to check that the computer actually 'computes'!

Gearing up

Psion's success over the past months has clearly seen big changes in the factory over that period. The plant is currently gearing up Series 5 production, and was running at around 25,000 units per month as of early September 1997. They plan to increase this to a staggering 40,000 per month before the end of the year—that's 2000 machines a *day*. This is in addition to around 20,000 combined 3c and Siena machines each month, and represents a monthly turnover *well* in excess of £10 million at retail prices.

In order to reach these impressive output figures Psion have *tripled* their output and doubled their workforce since the Series 3c and Siena launch late last year.

Initial headaches

The introduction of the more sophisticated Series 5 a few months ago has inevitably brought its own production headaches, and in the very early stages of production the first-pass failure rate on the assembly line was approaching 50%. This included *all* failures caused by a variety of reasons, and of course each machine is passed back into the production cycle to be corrected and re-tested. This failure rate was reduced to less than 10% within a short number of weeks, and Psion eventually hope to get it to below 1%.

Such setup hitches are all part of any complex and delicate manufacturing process, and Psion are not alone in this. Many production faults don't manifest themselves until production gears up to a high level, and troubles such as the peeling paint problem seen by some Series 5 users (myself included) were due to substandard cases supplied by one of Psion's subcontractors. Psion assured us that this problem has now been cured, and the pre-painted cases are being sourced from an alternative supplier.

Keeping stock

A large portion of the main assembly area is taken up by a storage area for blank circuit boards, components and packaging materials. Full production will see tens of millions of components passing through the factory stores every month, and the presentation boxes the machines are shipped to the shops in obviously take up a vast tract of storage space by themselves. The majority of components are sourced from UK-based companies, which tend to be able to offer a faster response than those in far-flung countries.

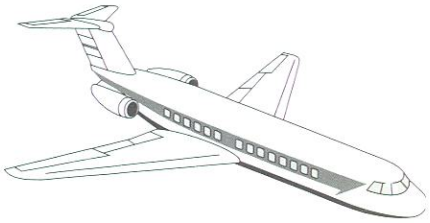
Impressed

Seeing such huge quantities of Psion hardware under construction was ultimately an impressive sight, and an insight into the full complexity of such an operation does a lot to help appreciate the problems that companies such as Psion must inevitably face in their quest for the holy grail of 100% reliable computer hardware. Producing a fully working computer in anything from a week down to an astoundingly fast 24 hours would impress *anyone*, and I was no exception.

Thanks to Greenford's Factory Manager, Shaun Doherty, for so kindly taking time to show us around the factory, and Steve Pang and Paul Lubbock for making it all possible.

Flying Psions

Lorimer Burn, an airline pilot with British Midland, talks about the use of Psions by pilots, and how it has become his indispensable inflight companion



***Palmtop* readers may be interested to learn how some of us commercial pilots use the Psion 3a/3c to make our jobs a little easier. Some of this will be unique to a pilot's tasks, but some may have wider applications. I am a pilot with British Midland Airways, flying the Boeing 737 out of London's Heathrow; at a guess, some 50 of our 380 or so pilots have a Psion, with more and more 'seeing the light' as time passes.**

There are around eight programs which have been written 'in house' to address various aspects of our work, together with the use of Psion's own built-in applications.

The first real value of the Psion involves the AGENDA. We receive a roster every six weeks giving us our individual flying programme for the following six weeks. It is a real advantage to be able to sit down and insert the full programme into the AGENDA, together with all the alarms for those early rises of 4am, 5am, etc. I also find David Joyce's *Timevoc* 'Talking clock' software useful for those restless nights in a foreign hotel bed when I can't find the light switch.

Being a fairly small airline, it is easy to have our full timetable in the database (not WORD, which is much too slow to search such a large volume of text) for checking on flight times.

Another database file I call 'Volmet'. It simply lists all the continuous weather broadcasts for the whole of Europe (67 entries,10K in size). This makes it very easy to search for the required one, because an airfield may be included on

several different radio transmissions in different locations, but I need to know which one is the nearest one to me at any point in time.

The major WORD file I use, (30K), lists a summary of our company procedures, references, formulae, emergency checklists (for revision), etc. There is nothing exceptional in that, but by using WORD's outline feature I am able to construct an index with only the headings showing at Level 1, and all the text at Level 9. This makes searching and navigation through the file much easier.

And now to a few of our dedicated programs:

Pilots have to keep a strict record of flying and duty hours, together with other sundry information. A 'logbook' program (and there are several) enables us to do just this, together with the ability to call up summaries and check for possible illegalities in the planned number of flying hours.

For each and every flight the weight and balance of the aircraft is a major concern to the Captain, and indeed we have a whole department solely responsible for this aspect of the operation. Several pilots have written programs which mimic the company's own computer program for these calculations. This is not to enable us to bypass the official computerised loadsheet, but it is of great assistance to us in cross-checking it, especially when abroad.

There are also the 'What if' considerations when, for instance, we might know how much fuel we want to carry, but how many passengers/freight can we also take?

The operation of one of these programs is very neat, in that the first letter of a word is 'live', so for instance, if I want to input the number of males to be carried, I simply press 'M', enter the number, and press the <Enter> key. All the other weights (such as take-off weight) on the screen are instantly adjusted.

There are 17 such inputs on the initial screen (1 of 3), and there are similar, simpler, programs for calculating fuel required during the flight by inputting ground speed, fuel flow, etc.

During the winter, runways can become covered in snow or other precipitation, which can affect the braking coefficient of the runway surface. This is of course of great interest to us pilots, because we do not want to be at such a weight as to be unable to stop before the end of a slippery runway! So each airport will report the runway conditions using an 8-figure code. A simple program means we only have to type in the numbers and up comes the translation—no searching through our manuals!

The WORLD program is useful for checking distances from A to B, as a rough check that our Flight Navigation Log is correct. It also helps to provide the local time when abroad, together with the telephone code for phoning home.

Other pilots will have more uses besides, and perhaps pilots in other airlines will have an altogether different approach to their use of the Psion on the flightdeck as well as in pre-flight planning.

One more point of interest. If I'm travelling as a passenger, airline rules do not allow me to use my Psion (or any other electrical appliance) whenever the seat belt signs are switched ON. As you will have guessed, we use our machines on the flightdeck all the time (well, not during take-off or landing—we're busy doing other things) and over some five years I have never noticed any interference with the aircraft's systems.

So all in all this is a remarkable machine which really makes my job easier, safer and more accurate in both planning and operation. The day I lose it or it dies irretrievably is the same day that I buy a replacement, and after backup from my PowerMac, I'll hopefully be back in business the same day.

FOR SALE

Series 5 (8MB version) - newly purchased in July 1997, with mains adaptor and Dixons' transferable 3 year guarantee. Complete with original packaging and documentation - £485

Contact: Mark Armitage on 01926 612368, or 01926 336111 during office hours (Leamington Spa area)

2MB Series 3a in mint condition, complete with manuals and original packing, plus 128K flash SSD, 256K flash SSD and Games 3a ROM SSD, all with original packing and manuals where applicable - £250 ovno.

Contact: 01856 871007 (office) or 01235 814031 (home) or 0378 417360 (mobile), and ask for J Ball.

Series 3c (1MB) - 8 months old, and including mains adaptor - £200.

Also Purple Software Cyclone drive - £140, and Series 3c printer cable - £20.

Contact: Peter Bewick 01603 783172 anytime.

The FIVE zone

In this new spot we look at the latest developments in the Series 5 world, and trace the growth of the product in these early months...

by Steve Clack

The biggest discussion point regarding the Series 5 so far appears to be "Where on earth can I get one?" There have been inevitable production glitches associated with getting the new production line up to speed, and Psion are still frantically trying to catch up with demand. Even two months after the official UK release date most High Street shops seem to have nothing more than a display box to show, with most dealers having their small consignments either pre-assigned to back orders or whisked off their shelves within a few hours. Outside the UK the situation has generally been even worse, with some enthusiasts going to great lengths to get their hands on a '5'.

Those who have managed to get their hands on a machine have largely been pleased with their purchase, though a few have experienced the horror of seeing the dark grey paint peeling off their casing. In a recent visit to Psion's Greenford production plant it was explained that this was due to a substandard batch from one of their suppliers, and this has now been corrected.

Also, some bugs in the system software have come to light after extensive use, and much talk of these has appeared on the Internet forums and elsewhere. In fairness to Psion, many of these are quite obscure, and only appear under rare circumstances. On the other hand, a few of them will give trouble to a number of ordinary users (myself included).

Firstly, an announcement from Psion on ROMs:

Psion Series 5 ROM upgrade

Psion Computers will be making a chargeable ROM upgrade service available to existing Series 5 owners during the first half of 1998. This will be ROM version 1.1 which will contain new features and improvements over the existing version of the ROM, and will be included in all new Series 5's when it's available.

The upgrade is for users who feel they need the additional features Psion can offer in version 1.1 of the ROM. It is not a requirement to remain compatible with Psion products. The Series 5 is a serious computer that is designed to last for many years, but it will be evolved to continue providing the best solution for mobile workers. Consequently, in the first half of 1998 Psion will be able to offer users new features in their Series 5 applications and operating system. However, existing owners of Series 5 (ROM version 1.0x) may feel that they need these new features and will be able to get them by upgrading their ROM to version 1.1.

How to Upgrade

The Series 5 will need to be sent to the user's local Psion Service Centre, listed in their service centre booklet included in their Series 5 box. The upgrade will be performed by a Psion technician and once completed, the machine will be returned to the user. Users who feel they are technically competent will have the ability to purchase an Upgrade Kit, but they will forfeit their warranty as the machine will have been opened by non-Psion service staff.

Availability

Users will be able to buy the upgrade service from their local Psion distributor service centre during the first half of 1998. Where a local Psion service centre does not exist, the local distributor will arrange for the upgrade to be performed at the nearest or most convenient service centre.

The upgrade will be available for all the major language variants that the Series 5 is available in.

Cost

Cost of the upgrade is anticipated to be in the region of £50 depending on the level of service provided. Details of ROM version 1.1, service options and the final cost of the upgrade in different countries will be published closer to the time.

In the light of these problems, *Palmtop* contacted Psion directly to find out their 'official' stance on these issues. Here is a list of our questions together with what Psion had to say:

Palmtop: "What is Psion's current stance on the bugs that have appeared on the Series 5?"

Psion: "Psion does have fixes for most of the problems reported and like any responsible high-tech company we will be improving our product on an ongoing basis. Ongoing means that we can't commit to what and when, merely that they will be improved. No product is ever launched without problems/bugs, but they are addressed as soon as possible."

"Overall, Psion cannot offer a bug fix or upgrade before the first half of 1998. For users who feel they cannot manage then the last option if they feel dissatisfied with the product is to return their machine."

Palmtop: "Will an interim ROM release appear in the near future (i.e. before version 1.1) that at least fixes the small number of more pervasive bugs? If so, how will it be administered?"

Psion: "There have been improvements to the Series 5 since its launch. For the bugs which have been identified by users, Psion can only guarantee that early owners will be offered the option of the additional features contained in ROM 1.1 in the first half of 1998, estimated to cost around £50. This proposal will be reviewed, but we cannot confirm anything more at this point in time."

"Psion is continually improving the Series 5 (both hardware and software) and any problems reported will be addressed as soon as possible by feeding into the development of the product."

Palmtop: "Will version 1.1 merely be a comprehensive bug fixing exercise, or will it genuinely offer some useful added features? If so, can you give *some* broad indication of what this might encompass?"

Psion: "ROM 1.1 is not a bug fixing exercise, but will offer extra functionality. At this time we cannot go into details, but things like 'Sorting' in spreadsheets will be addressed. We may also see a new application program included, apart from improvements to all the applications and the operating system, some of which will be in direct response to users' suggestions on new features and improvements."

Palmtop: "If a customer calls Psion Technical Support complaining that one of the existing bugs is causing problems to them, what are they being told? Are they offered a fix, any kind of recompense, or a refund?"

Psion: "Technical Support can only feed the Series 5 users' experiences back, and these notes are used when considering improvement for Psion products. Any 'fixes' are currently only being

offered by ROM 1.1, along with the extra functions. Psion has not offered compensation nor refunds based on the feedback it has received to date because so far only a few have reported problems, so they've not been significant enough to warrant such actions. This is the same policy as used with the S3/3a/3c/Siena."

Palmtop: "Has the peeling paint problem been fixed on machines currently being shipped, and how is Psion offering to satisfy existing users suffering from this problem?"

Psion: "One of the issues which has surfaced is the coating on the Series 5. This has been looked into and the quality of the coating so no longer a problem. On saying that, there is no current remedy for existing users."

The birth of a new palmtop generation

The snowball of Series 5 software is gathering momentum already, with a handful of commercial offerings available and new shareware programs appearing daily. From the next issue we'll use this new regular spot to highlight some of the best new arrivals, and keep abreast of any other significant new developments for this exciting new machine.

FOR SALE

Psion 3c 2MB with mains lead and various software titles - £200, including 4 years extended warranty, Also Series 3a (1MB) with fax modem - £200.

Contact: Ian on 0421 450720 or leave message on 0336 748456.

Two 3Fax modems for Series 3a - £80 each. Also Series 3 Tools and Compute-a-diet on SSD - £15 each, all with manuals.

Contact: Graham on 01782 825555.

Psion 3a (2MB), top condition, including manual - £200 ono. Also, Psion Money, Banker, Professional Finance, DataView Pro, Paint and Compose, Berlitz Phrase Book, PsiWin 1.0 and WinLink 2 - all for 50% of current retail prices (Widget price list).

Contact: David Arndt on 0973 255464 or fax 0171 6917131, e-mail ddaweb@aol.com.

The Swiss-army contact manager

There are numerous different contact management programs available for your Psion, but with a little bit of lateral thinking you can do it all quite elegantly with nothing more than your built-in AGENDA

by Steve Litchfield

The challenge with contact management is to somehow manage the link-up between names, contact details, dates, times and alarms, plus a variety of potentially long contact reports and logs. The Psion's applications, though excellent in their own way, aren't really up to the task of working together to handle this requirement.

There are three possible solutions:

- Use DATA, AGENDA and WORD independently and try to keep track of how the various entries relate to each other—tricky once you go beyond a handful of contacts.
- Use a dedicated third party application. Very possible—there are some good ones available for the Series 3a/3c (*ACT!*, *Contact Edge*, *Relate*, *Psi-Tact*, etc.), but none yet for the Series 5.
- Use that 'Swiss army knife' application, AGENDA, in the manner described below. It works well for up to perhaps 100 or so contacts, and has the benefit that it's free, it doesn't take up any extra space, it uses the program you already know and love, and it will work seamlessly on the 3a/3c, Siena *and* the Series 5.

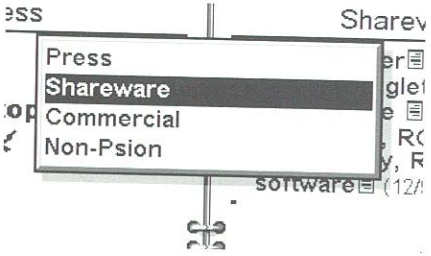
I'm rather fond of finding novel things to do with the built-in Psion applications, hence this article. Although I'm using a Series 5 here, the same approach can be used on the Siena or 3a/3c. There are a few differences which I'll note as we go along, but the basic principle is exactly the same—you just get a few more bells and whistles on the 5!

So AGENDA is our 'core' application. In a similar manner to the approach taken

by, for example, the 3a/3c shareware program *Contact Log*, it's important to realise that although the main details for a contact are still going to be held in DATA, with its support for large numbers of fields, the actual contact management 'engine' only really needs the contact name and phone number, etc. The advantage of using AGENDA as the 'core' rather than DATA is that support is built-in for alarms and reminders, plus the ability to easily group contacts by category.

The basic idea

The idea is to use AGENDA's groups of to-do lists as our data repository. A nice touch of the Series 5 AGENDA is that pressing <Tab> in the to-do list display gives a pop-up menu allowing you to quickly select which list of to-dos (or in our case, contacts) you wish to view. On the 3a/3c you'll have to scroll the to-do lists left and right to access the one you want. The titles of each to-do list should reflect a particular group of contacts, e.g. 'Shareware' for a list of shareware authors, with each contact being a to-do entry in that list, or you might have



Popping up a list of to-dos on the '5'

'DECR/2', for customers related to your company's *DECR/2* product, etc.

With the 3a/3c AGENDA, further input beyond entering a contact name (and perhaps also company name) is limited to a maximum of around 3K of text in a 'memo'. With the Series 5, we can now attach WORD documents of unlimited size, plus soundbites, spreadsheets, SKETCH pictures and so forth. Each to-do should ideally be dated with the next date you expect to phone or meet that contact. If you don't know this date, then on the Series 5 just enter something a long time into the future. The 3a/3c allows entries to be undated and also 'hidden' by being given a lower priority, and so allows a finer degree of control over your contacts. By the way, you'll probably want to go to the to-do list preferences ('settings' on the 3a/3c) for each of your lists and make sure 'Display entries in other views' is turned ON. I'm not going to spell out every single dialog entry and setting because the way AGENDA works is always a very personal affair, and you'll have your own ideas about fine tuning these techniques to suit your own way of working.

Trying it out...

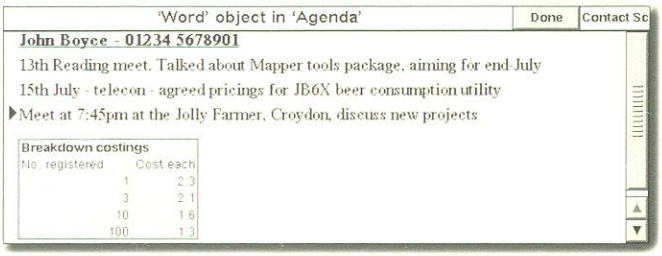
Let's take an example to see how it works in practice. Let's say John Boyce, the famous freeware author, is one of my contacts (note I haven't listed his *real* contact details). Entering his name as a new to-do in my 'Shareware' list on the

Series 5, I use the 'More' button to bring up the main tabbed dialog which lets me do the fancy stuff. The first thing to

set up is a contact log for John. Go to the 'Text' tab and you'll see that you can insert objects after John's name. I inserted a WORD object for the log to contain John's details, when I last spoke to him, a record of what we discussed, and so on. On the Series 3a/3c you can do the same thing by either using <Psion><+> or choosing 'Edit memo' from the menu. In either case, the Psion's built-in word processor appears, ready for action.

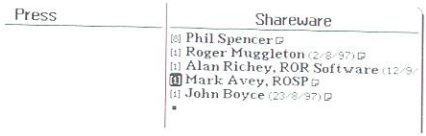
At the top of a useful contact log will be a repeat of the contact name and his/her phone number plus other essential details. These can be pasted in (or you can 'Bring' them across on the 3a/3c) from a more detailed record in DATA if you wish. I find it helpful to make this header information bold and underlined, to help it stand out. After the header, everything is a simple diary of all contacts made with John. On the Series 5, because this is a full-blown WORD document, you can insert additional pictures and spreadsheets into the log as needed. Closing down the document returns you to the tabbed dialog on the Series 5, or to a main view on the 3a/3c with the cursor still on John's name.

If you're doing this on the 3a or 3c you'll already have been through the dialog option to set a due date for this to-do entry. You may not want John's name to appear on any particular date and will be able to lower the to-do's priority so as not to display it on the 'Day' or 'Week' views. If you *did* want a due date, just


'Word' object in 'Agenda'
Done
Contact Sc
John Boyce - 01234 5678901
13th Reading meet. Talked about Mapper tools package, aiming for end-July
15th July - telecon - agreed pricings for JB6X beer consumption utility
Meet at 7:45pm at the Jolly Farmer, Croydon, discuss new projects
Breakdown costings
No. registered Cost each
1 2.3
3 2.1
10 1.6
100 1.3

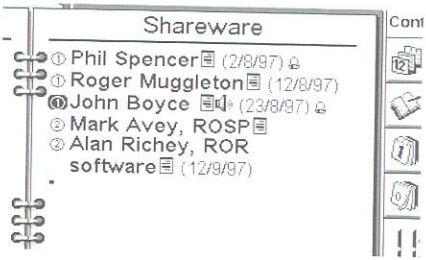
Entering a set of contact details into an AGENDA 'memo' on either a 3a/3c or a Series 5 (shown here)

press <Enter> again twice on the entry to bring the dialog up on screen and then fill it out as required.



To-do entries showing on the 3a/3c

On the Series 5 you have no choice in the matter, short of declaring that you don't want *any* of your contacts in that list to be shown in other AGENDA views, which decreases the benefit of this whole technique. Moving to the 'Date' tab, it's important to set a next-contact date for your interaction with John.



...and on the Series 5

John's name will be flagged up automatically in other AGENDA views on the date you select. If you don't get round to contacting him on that date, the to-do system will flag up his name each subsequent day until you get around to it, which is a handy touch.

Why do it this way?

The whole point of using AGENDA for all this is to make the most of its ability to schedule alarms and generally keep track of time. Alarms might not be needed for simple telephone calls, but they are essential to avoid the embarrassment of being late for face-to-face meetings. Although it's not possible to have a to-do appear as a timed event within the 'Week' or 'Day' views, it is possible to give it an alarm time. Typically, you'd set this to remind you slightly ahead of the time of your meeting with the contact.

Having completed the entry details for John Boyce we'll see him appear in several ways: firstly, he will appear as part of the list of contacts in the 'Shareware' section. Note that in all views the Psions use a little word processor icon to indicate that there is a document or memo attached. In the day or week views John's name will appear on the date of the next meeting, or every day thereafter if the meeting is missed, or if I forget to update his details. Amending the contact log for John is simple on each Psion machine. On the 3a or 3c use <Psion><+> to directly edit the contact log file, or press <Enter> twice on his name to bring up the 'To-do details' dialog, where you can amend the next-contact date (and an alarm, if needed). On the Series 5, either use <Ctrl><Shift><Z> to edit the log file directly, or press <Enter> or tap with the pen on his name in any view. This will bring up the basic 'Edit to-do' dialog

and tapping twice on the document icon will bring up the contact log file for John, ready for updating. After amending the log and using <Control><E> or tapping on 'Done', the next task is to amend the entry date and reset or remove the alarm, if appropriate.

As your number of contacts grows beyond 20 or so, you'll need quicker ways to navigate to their entries. It's worth noting that Psion have kindly provided a powerful 'Find' facility in AGENDA, which amongst other things can locate a particular contact name and take you straight to the right to-do list.

Using AGENDA in this way is surprisingly powerful. Most Psion owners already regard this application as the centre of their digitally-assisted life, so finding yet another use for it should make things even easier. If I've sparked off your imagination, then this article has done its job. For some people, it may even be possible to store *all* contact details in the to-do log files, in which case you can be totally radical and throw DATA out completely—happy Psioning!

Thanks must go to Itamar Engelsman, who originally gave me the idea for this article.

In the next issue, we'll look at using AGENDA as a project management tool.

FOR SALE

Psion MC400 laptop (good condition) - £150.

Contact: Kevin Ash on 01932 711031 or 0973 222823 (mobile).

8MB flash SSD - £450, 4MB flash SSD - £300, 512K RAM SSD - £100, Compute-a-diet - £60, Autoroute Express - £60, Berlitz Interpreter - £20, Spell Checker and Thesaurus - £20, Berlitz Phrase Book - £20, Toolkit 1 - £20.

Contact: Damian Bryan on 01933 383826 (evenings/weekends).

Complete Psion Organiser II system: comprising Organiser II LZ-64 (64K RAM), 30 minute datapack formatter, Paralink parallel printer link, RS232 communications link, mains adaptor, Psion Formulator datapack with manual, Psion Finance datapack with manual, Psion spell checker/thesaurus with manual, Autoscribe datapack, 2 x 128K datapacks, 64K datapack, 256K RAMpage, 32K datapack, flash datapack formatter (all in good condition) - £150.

Contact: J C Harbutt on 01934 416999.

FOR SALE

Psion 3a (1MB), 3Fax modem, power adaptor, 1MB SSD and 512K SSD. Offers welcomed for quick sale.

Contact: Mark Bury on 0181 9947351 home) or 0181 9955559 work) or 0370 754445 mobile), email 106213.2436 @compuserve.com.

Series 3a PsiWin PC link and software - £20, 3Fax modem - £50, parallel printer cable - £10. All as new and at a quarter of original cost price.

Contact: Martin Urch on 0836 781195.

Backlit 2MB Series 3c, boxed with PsiWin, programming manual and Widget Quick Reference Guide (for 3a) - £250. Also Autoroute Express, Scrabble and Psion Chess, all boxed and on SSD. Call with offers.

Contact: John Langdon-Shreeve on 01634 865539 after 6pm.

Cyclone floppy drive for Series 3a. Still under warranty, boxed with manuals and software - £120. Also 3a parallel print link -£15.

Contact: Alister Pack on 01536 330215, or 0860 650033 (mobile).

Parallel printer link for 3c - £20, Personal Accounts & Expenses on SSD - £20.

Contact: Edgar on 01222 594833 after 4:30pm (Cardiff).

1MB Series 3a - $175, Cyclone floppy disk drive - $150, 1MB RAM SSD - $150, ACT! (on SSD) - $50, Financial Calculator (on SSD), Automap Road Atlas - $50, or buy everything together with free programming manual for $550.

Contact: Ed Francell (USA) toll free (in USA only) on 1 800 756 5207, or e-mail efrancell @prodigy.net.

Sticks and stones

Pete Sipple takes a nostalgic look at Psion ownership

I nearly wept.

Okay, maybe a *little* over-dramatic, but a recent encounter caused me to experience a few previously buried emotions. Browsing through items on display in a second-hand shop last week I came across an electronic antique—a battered old *Psion Organiser II*.

For those who don't remember the predecessor to the Series 3 family, the Organiser II came in two flavours: the LZ range (with a four-line display) and the CM/XP (two lines). The Organiser II was very limited by today's standards, to say the least. With its tiny display of just 32 characters, its 9V PP3 battery, clunky UV-formattable datapaks, slide-down plastic case and the non-QWERTY keyboard, it looks pretty low-tech today, but for several years my trusty XP was a good friend to me.

So, what upset me so much? The label attached to this relic said 'Psion Calculator—sold as seen'.

'Calculator?' In its day it was the finest little computer on the market. Even though I have no use for a machine that I hastily discarded and subsequently sold years ago, I couldn't bear to see it in the hands of those barbarians—I *had* to liberate it. 'Calculator?'—they didn't have a clue! Ten pounds secured the freedom of the 'calculator', and it now resides in the back of a drawer peacefully, where I'll probably forget about it for another five years.

It all came flooding back though. My 'relationship' with Psions started in the mid-eighties when I enviously eyed a colleague using one. He described it as an 'electronic book': addresses, birthdays, a calculator and, heck, you could even program it. *And* it had a massive 32KB of memory. I had to have one. For me, the electronic 'Hitch-Hiker's Guide' envisaged by science-fiction author Douglas Adams was now a reality.

I never imagined, over ten years later that I'd still be 'faithful' to Psion's little grey boxes. They've been good to me over the years, seen me out of scrapes (forgotten birthdays are a thing of the past), and even paid for themselves through my humble shareware offerings and my scribblings for *Palmtop*.

Sticks and Stones? Whether it's jealously, technophobia or, heaven forbid, common sense, non-believers have given us Psion users a hard time. If I had an SSD for every time I've heard "Why don't you get a real computer?", "Let's

have a play with your toy", "Poser!" or "cute—one of those filofax things", I'd have enough to fill at least a dozen of those SSD 'toast racks'.

Perhaps the same is true for you. When you take the time to show a 'doubting Thomas' the virtues of a Psion, they eventually end up impressed. The Series 5's pen input still seems to sway most people, the 3a SOUND gimmick had similar effect on the uninitiated, with WORLD being the impressive visual touch on the 3. The best the Organiser II had to offer was its high speed 'FIND A:' for data retrieval, but for its time, it was clever. Still, I can't help feeling that the world was only pretending to be interested—to humour me.

To my credit, I've converted two colleagues to Series 5s in recent weeks, and created several 3a users over the years. I've managed to find friendly buyers for my old pride-and-joys, so either I'm an undiscovered salesman, or it's a good product. My last two 'significant others' have also become owners, presumably on the "If you can't beat them, join them" theory. Could this explain why I'm still single?

Although I'm guilty of being a Psion addict, I don't consider that I'm the worst culprit. I don't own a holster, have a pet name for my electronic companion and I've yet to screw my '5' to the car's dashboard, but I think that this week I may have got my priorities slightly wrong. I'm going on holiday to the US in three days, and when I should be confirming flights and buying suntan lotion, I'm 'playing with my toy' (allegedly). But at least I've done my packing. Yes—I've packed my 3c (with PsiMail Internet and a currency convertor), modem, adaptor, leads and spare batteries. It was a tough choice, but I've decided that my 5 should stay at home to keep my Siena company. I've taken precautions. I've backed-up, so I'm sorted. I've got all the bases covered. If I've got room, I might remember to take a Passport, toothbrush, clothes...

I suppose I should finish with a grand statement, or maybe a moral. Perhaps a message to the sheepish commuter who guiltily taps away on the 7:48, or the Tetris player on London Underground recently (who hid his 3a screen when he saw me looking). Then there's the attractive young girl at the supermarket who blushed when she saw me watching her surreptitiously accessing her shopping list on a Psion, not to mention the guy in high street retailers, Dixons, who I heard desperately trying to justify the cost of the latest product to his wife. You are not alone—although at times that's how it seems. We're with you. We understand. And we must stick together. Judging by sales, there are millions of us—a huge army of unpaid and often frustrated Psion Ambassadors, who all made a good choice.

So, have pride in your purchase. Hold your head up high, wave your stylus, your leather case, your copy of *Palmtop*, or your mains lead in the air—and repeat after me: "It's not a calculator!"

Programmers' Workshop

by Leigh Edwards

Life for Psion programmers is rich with choices, and with the introduction of the Series 5 it's just become even richer. New developments in the pipeline will soon make the choices simply bewildering, so here is a brief review of all the current options and some news about the future. We'll conclude this article in the next issue, with sections on OPL32 and OVAL, and a look at the programmers' support available from various sources.

Desktop or palmtop?

Some very impressive shareware applications have been produced in OPL using nothing more than a Psion machine. However, your choice of language and development environment are considerably more restricted. Using a PC ensures that virtually all of the development options are available.

Psion emulators

Psion have produced DOS-based emulators for the Series 3/3a, Siena and the Workabout. For Series 5 development, the Windows 95-based WINS emulator is available. Emulators are great for PC-hosted development, but only for limited testing.

PC linked to a Psion

A PC is mandatory if you intend to use OVAL, ODE (the OPL Development Environment) or any of the Psion SDKs (Software Development Kits).

Language options

The language choice depends upon many factors including previous experience, the development platform available, the application requirements, processing demands and possibly its target audience.

Assembly language

Usually used because the highest possible processing speed is needed, or because the result cannot be achieved in any other way, e.g. writing device drivers. Four main options exist for assembly language fans:

TopSpeed assembler and linker

Available separately from TopSpeed Corporation, or as supplied with the Psion C SDK professional edition.

Borland assembler and linker

Programmers who need to write device drivers will have to use assembly language. Example device drivers are provided with Psion's C SDK. The Borland Turbo Assembler (TASM.EXE) and Turbo Linker (TLINK.EXE) required to build the example drivers are not supplied with the C SDK.

S3Asm

S3Asm is a Psion hosted editor and assembler for 8086 class processors, and is suitable for 3a/3c systems (and possibly the Siena). S3Asm is shareware.

Machine code book

A fourth option is available in the form of a book entitled 'Machine Code Programming on the Psion Series 3a and 3', by John Farrant, published by Kuma Books Ltd (ISBN 0-7457-0299-6 - may be out of print). The book includes a functional two-pass assembler with text editor and debugger as OPL source listings within the text of the book.

C programming

Used by those with previous experience in C, or due to the availability of C source code, for future portability of code to other platforms or for processing speed. Four options exist for C programmers, although for serious/commercial development in C, the only viable option is to use the Psion C SDK.

CPOC

CPOC is a Psion-hosted C development system that is still being developed. The authors state that they intend to produce a full C development system that can be used to edit and build functioning programs entirely on a Psion system.

S3C111

A Psion-hosted C development system and compiler that is complete but very limited, though the author states that it's possible to build fully functioning programs with S3C111.

PLINK

C code compiled with the Microsoft C compiler (or others) can be converted to Psion format with the PLINK cross-linker, then run from inside an OPL program. Useful for speeding up time critical sections of an OPL program.

C SDK options

The current version of the Psion C SDK is 2.20 and three variants are available:

- The documentation only version includes the Psion software environment including libraries, header files and utilities, but without the TopSpeed compiler.
- The standard version is a fully usable version including documentation and the compiler.
- The professional version adds the TopSpeed assembler and the source code for the Psion CLIB library.

C++

The Psion C++ SDK may be used to write highly efficient compact Series 5 applications, it includes:

- All user-side class libraries.
- The WINS emulation of the Psion Series 5.
- Tools (for project control, resource compilation, bitmap and font manipulation, etc.)
- Example code.
- Documentation supplied in HTML format.

The C++ SDK includes the GNU tool chain required to compile for Series 5. You will also need Microsoft Visual C++ to compile programs for WINS, the Windows 95/NT version of EPOC32.

Java

Psion Software PLC recently announced that they had licensed Java technologies from Sun Microsystems Inc, for porting to the EPOC32 platform. There is also a privately run Java project that is actively porting Java to the 16-bit Psion machines.

Java is a cross-platform industry standard development language allowing the development of fully featured programs. Java's strong Internet support will make it easier to develop Internet-centric applications for Psion platforms.

OPL16

OPL is the only real option for those without a PC. Excellent for fully-fledged applications, it is also ideal for off-the-cuff programming tasks.

ODE

The OPL16 Development Environment (ODE) is an excellent Windows-hosted Integrated Development Environment (IDE) that includes:

- A project manager.
- A powerful multi-file source code editor with coloured syntax highlighting.
- OPLLINT, a code checking utility.
- OPL translators suitable for the S3, 3a/3c, Siena, Workabout and HC.

- Powerful context sensitive help that calls on a full OPL reference library.
- PC to Psion communications capability via a suitable link cable (not provided).

OPL16 SDK

The current version of the Psion OPL16 SDK is version 3.0, and provides all the tools and information necessary to develop sophisticated OPL16 language applications, it contains:

- Two A4 size volumes, comprising thirteen manuals.
- The Psion OPL16 software environment, including libraries, header files, macro files and utility software.
- A range of example program source code.
- ODE (OPL16 Development Environment), a Windows PC-based Integrated Development Environment.

OPL16 translators

Psion have produced a range of DOC-based OPL16 translators. The translators are able to pre-process and translate OPL16 source code into a form suitable for execution on the target Psion system or DOS based emulator.

All of the available OPL16 translators are supplied as part of ODE and the OPL16 SDK produced by Psion, some are available on-line.

OPLLINT

An invaluable DOS utility from Psion (available on-line) for checking the syntax and use of variables and procedures in an OPL16 program. OPLLINT should be used to check your code before any significant application testing is done.

OPP

OPP is an excellent OPL programmers' utility (DOS or Psion-based) for extending OPL16 using operating system calls, and preparing for debugging OPL16 programs with OPPDBG.

OPL debugger

OPPDBG provides an excellent OPL16 programmers' source level debugging utility. It relies on use of the OPP pre-processor from the same author.

AKA

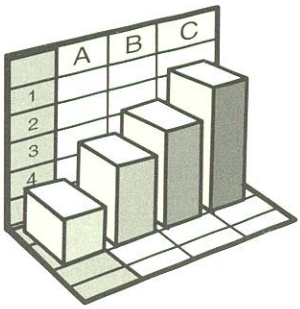
A valuable DOS-based OPL16 utility that will shorten variable and procedure names, reduce the size of OPO or OPA programs and speed them up slightly.

OPLCS editor

OPLCS, short for OPL Code Studio, is a Windows-based OPL16 code editor and template-based code generator.

This article is contracted from a more comprehensive discussion in Leigh's new programming book, 'Programming Psion Computers' —See page 113.

Working with SHEET



A series aimed at the relative beginner to the Psion's built-in programs—here's the third part of our tutorial designed primarily for 3a/3c/Siena users

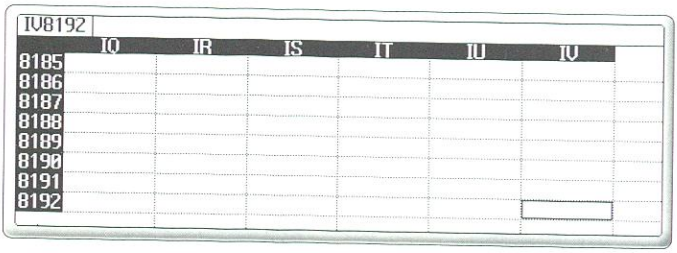
by Steve Clack

Since learning the basics of cells, cell widths and alignment in the last instalment, we move on to actually entering some *real* data, formatting what you have entered, and selecting a range of cells.

Enter some data!

First, we'll get straight down to entering some data to work on. Start off by moving the cursor to the SHEET icon on your main system screen, and press <Psion><N> to create a new SHEET file. Give it a suitable name, such as 'lesson', and press <Enter> to go into the new and empty spreadsheet.

Before entering the first data item, use the arrow keys to move the cursor to, let's say, cell B2. 'B2' is known as the *cell reference*, and is simply the letter that you find at the top of the column in question, and the number is of course the one at the left of the corresponding row. No matter how far you traverse across a spreadsheet the white-on-black row and column headings will always be visible on screen to help you keep track of where you are, unless you choose to hide them (which we'll cover in a later instalment). Even if you *do* choose to hide the headings you can always see the grid reference of the currently selected cell displayed in the little box in the top left hand side of the screen.



The outer limits—the bottom right corner of a Series 3a/3c spreadsheet

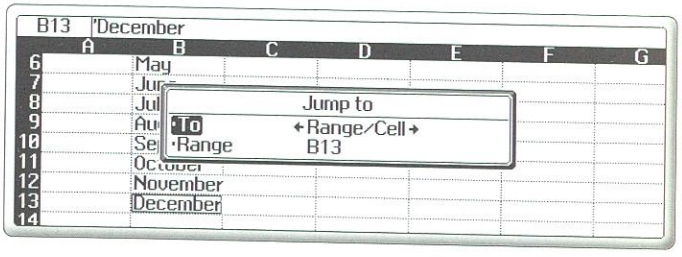
Series 3a/3c spreadsheets are in fact a grid some 256 cells wide and 8192 cells deep, though you would reach SHEET's 40 kilobyte maximum file size limit long before you had populated even a small fraction of the two million or so cells of the entire matrix. The row numbers simply run from 1-8192 as you might expect, but when you reach the 26th column (column Z), the notation changes: column 27 is labelled as 'AA', 28 as 'AB', 53 as 'BA' and so on, right up to column 'IV', or 256.

Once you have moved to cell B2, enter a column of headings from 'January' through to 'December', one below another. You'll notice that the text you enter only appears in the *formula bar* at the top of screen until you either press the <Enter> key, or one of the arrow keys. Pressing an arrow key has the effect of both entering the text into the cell, and simultaneously moving the cursor one cell in the direction of the arrow key you pressed. Use the latter method to save yourself a keypress every time you enter one of the month names!

Jumping around

If you have followed instructions exactly then you should have a screen that looks almost identical to the one shown below (without the dialog box), with the cursor on cell B13. This is a good point at which to show a slightly faster way of moving around your sheet. Either press <Psion><J>, or select 'Jump to' from the 'Search' menu. Then, in the dialog box leave the top line at its default option of 'Range/Cell', move down to the lower line with the arrow key, and type 'b2' (it doesn't matter if you use lower case letters) and press the <Enter> key. This will instantly jump you back to the

The 'Jump to' dialog, ready for you to enter the cell location you want to 'teleport' to



'January' cell, without having to press the up arrow 11 times in succession.

You can use the 'Jump to' feature to whizz around from cell to cell much faster than just keeping your finger pressed on the arrow keys, provided you have some idea of the cell reference you want to jump to. You can even give *names* to specific cell references if you wish, and this feature was covered in more detail in our article 'Name that cell!' in issue 1 of *Palmtop*. Apart from moving to specific cell grid references, you can also jump to one of the four corners of the current worksheet: just select 'Corner' from the top line of the dialog box, then choose from one of the four corners shown in the bottom line. Note that selecting 'Bottom right' won't take you to cell IV8192, but to the bottom rightmost cell that you have entered data into, in this case back to B13.

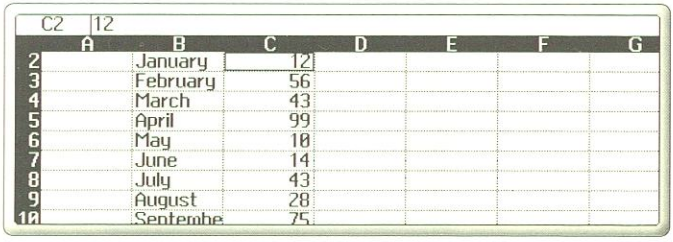
Numbers next...

Next, move to cell C2 by whatever means you prefer, and enter any integer (whole number) between 10 and 99. Repeat this with cells C3-C13, by which time you should have a two digit number to the right of each of the 12 month names you entered down the 'B' column. Then, press <Psion><J> again, and jump back to cell C2.

A selection box

Now we've got a column of 12 months with numbers to the right of them, let's assume that we want the numbers to represent money amounts. This is where *cell formatting* comes in. If we take the seemingly easy route of entering a currency sign (a '£' in the UK, but different if you are in another country) *before* the numbers, then the spreadsheet will fail to perform any mathematical calculations on the numbers. This is because the Psion spreadsheets always expect numbers (at least ones you want to use in calculations) to begin with a digit from 1-9. Starting it with a '£', '$' or whatever will fool the Psion into thinking you've entered a piece of text, like the month names, and will ignore it when it tries to make any calculations.

The only way to display a nice neat currency symbol in front of the numbers is to use cell formatting.



Back at cell C2, with some random numbers entered alongside the months

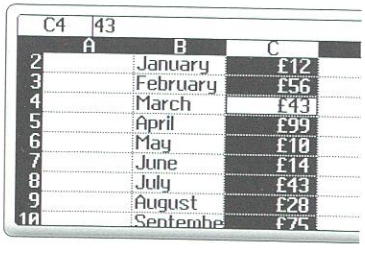
First, we must pick the cells to be changed to currency format. The first way is to hold down the <Shift> key and use the arrow keys to highlight the cells you want. Try this yourself, pressing the down arrow three or four times. You'll see that those few cells now appear as white text on a black background, in other words the cells are *selected*, ready to apply a formatting command to them. As so often, there is a quicker way, and in this case just hold down the <Control> key and press <Tab> (there's no need to deselect the cells you had already highlighted). This will select all the cells in the 'C' column, right down to C8192. You can scroll or jump down to the bottom of the sheet to check if you like, but don't press the left or right arrow keys, as they'll deselect the whole column and move the cursor in whatever direction you told it.

Sign on!

To apply the formatting to the column of cells, press <Psion><M>, or select 'Format' from the 'View' Menu. This brings up a dialog box from which you must select a number of options:

1. In the 'Set' line, leave the label set to 'Range'. Setting it to 'Default' would set every cell in the entire spreadsheet to currency format.
2. The 'Range' line defaults to 'C1:C100', which means that it will apply the format to all the cells from C1 through to C100. This is despite the fact that you effectively selected the whole range C1:C8192, and is done because *every cell in a spreadsheet that has custom formatting applied to it consumes a little extra memory*. Never apply formatting to *too many* unnecessary cells, but in this case leave it at the default.
3. Set the 'Show as' line to 'Currency'. This is what will put the symbol in front of each number.
4. Set the 'Decimal places' value to zero. If you leave it at '2' then a price of £12 will show up as £12.00, which we'll decide against this time.
5. Leave the 'Font' line set as it is. We'll look at fonts another time.
6. Finally, press the <Enter> key and you'll see a currency symbol next to every number you have entered so far.

Success! A whole column of numbers, neatly formatted as currency.



Until next time, save the spreadsheet by pressing <Psion><S>. In the next instalment we'll look at performing some calculations on your data.

Steve's Siena Spot

More in the world of that smallest of Psions...

by Steve Litchfield

Many people have said for a long time that the Siena is over-priced. Not that it's not worth the money, but that everyday browsers in the high street might easily be put off by the high price and never investigate further, settling for a far less capable 'databank' or organiser.

Psion have at last started to address this criticism, reducing the retail prices of both Sienas by £30-40 (in the UK). So the 512K model will appear in the shops at just under £130, a much more sensible price, and one at which it would be nice to see them selling in reasonable numbers.

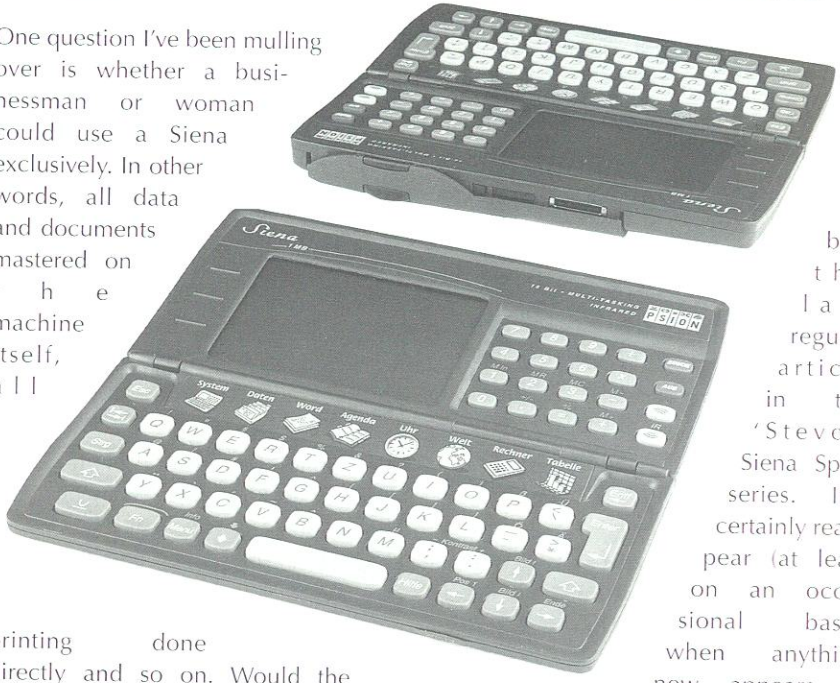
With the launch of the sparkling Series 5 (reviewed in Issue 13), Psion have rationalised and simplified their range of palmtops. Most Siena owners go for the 512K model, and most Series 5 owners go for 8MB. In between the two is the only surviving Series 3 variant, the 2MB (backlit) 3c. All of this looks very neat on paper, with a gradual increase in size, functionality and price as we go up the scale.

The Siena's form factor continues to impress just about everyone who handles it. At exactly half the size and weight of a Series 5 and one quarter the cost, it's a very powerful way to put databases, documents and spreadsheets in your pocket.

Without (I hope) seeming too much like a traitor to readers of this column, I've been trying out a Series 5 as my main machine for the last month. Upgrading my Siena files was a doddle with Psion's supplied PsiWin 2.0 software. It's just a shame they didn't also provide convertors to go the other way around, as it would have been very nice to quickly and easily keep data from a Series 5

current on a Siena. There are some situations where the bulk of the larger machine just isn't appropriate, and as it is, I have to mess around with tab-delimited text files if I want to transfer my address book over to the Siena. I wonder whether Psion will ever do a 32-bit version? That would make things *much* easier.

One question I've been mulling over is whether a businessman or woman could use a Siena exclusively. In other words, all data and documents mastered on the machine itself, all printing done directly and so on. Would the screen or keyboard size be prohibitive? Would the internal memory size be a problem? If you use a Siena in this way, why not write in to *Palmtop*'s letters section and share your experiences?



The Siena software scene has been very quiet recently, but apart from *Psi-Tact* and *PsioYahtzee* (examined in Shareware Shorts on page 13), one file you might want to look out for is SNFAQ.TXT, a Siena 'Frequently Asked Questions'. FAQs are always interesting to read through and I'll guarantee you learn something new in the process.

Due to the tiny amount of new software developments for the Siena over the past few months, this will be the last regular article in the 'Steve's Siena Spot' series. It'll certainly reappear (at least on an occasional basis) when anything new appears to write about, so don't give up hope entirely!

***Palmtop* will continue to cover any new Siena products as and when they appear - Ed.**

"On The Net"

The latest gossip from Psion's online community

Our cyber-surfer Pete Sipple takes a look at what's being discussed on the Internet's Psion chat areas. This time around we catch up on some Series 5 problems, password panics, phone tones and other computer catastrophes...

The hot topic is still the Series 5. As well as a collection of software 'bugs', there are also some reported hardware problems. If you weren't one of those 3a/3c users who rushed to the shops as soon as you heard about the Series 5, you may be relieved to find that you may not have a 'flaky' machine. It seems that some of the early models are suffering from problems with their coating...

"Mine's coming off too. Has anyone got an S5 which doesn't have the coating peeling off? Mine started after a day or two." *(ben@wuli.demon.co.uk)*

"Mine didn't until recently. I thought that I had one of those 'fixed' units, but I guess not. Starts at the corners and then on the ends of the keyboard (that tab below the space bar). Nothing bad yet. But I suspect that as time goes by, the peeling will accelerate. Should I have put suntan lotion on the S5 before taking it out?" *(jfmezei@videotron.ca)*

"I've solved the peeling problem, sort of... It peels off no more because it's *all* come off and I now have a bald Psion. From what I gather though, it's only the very early ones that suffered this fate and they are freely replaceable under warranty, if you can find somewhere that will swap it that is!" *(s.applegarth @zetnet.co.uk)*

As well as premature balding, several Series 5'ers have reported a new condition, 'stuck stylus'. Keen not to part with their new machines, some users have tried something that is not recommended—Do It Yourself.

"It was bound to happen sooner or later. The spring clip inside the stylus holder on my Series 5 has broken. Now I am going to have to send in my Psion and be without it for a while. How stupid is that? Why didn't Psion just have a simple non-moving mechanism like

every other PDA on the market? Do we really need a clever pop out mechanism? It's just one more thing that can get broken." *(Gideon@worldnet.att.net)*

"I've had the pen latch problem, and fixed it by loosening the two screws underneath the side doors—you'll probably hear it spring back into place. Along those same lines, I took my 5 completely apart—pretty much removed anything that's not soldered, and wrote down numbers and drew diagrams and everything—plan on scanning it (the actual disassembled Psion) into the PC later this week, hopefully.) If anybody cares for any info on how anything works (the "spring" latch is lamer than you think it is, just a plastic rotating piece), mail me. I documented my journey pretty well and can probably tell you anything mechanical about the machine that you want to know." *(grady@ibm.net)*

"Do we really need a clever pop out mechanism? It's just one more thing that can get broken."

On the subject of the 'Warranty void if removed' sticker, many curious users have been keen to look beneath the lid. If you *do* peek, will you pay the price?

"I have a feeling that the voiding of warranties by opening electrical goods has been tested in court and ended up not worth the paper it was written on. Does anyone know if this is definitely true? Say you opened an S5 today and in 9 months time the screen died—would it be reasonable for Psion not to repair it under warranty because you had opened the case 9 months before?" *(packman@cix.co.uk)*

"I think that's true, but I'm sure the stickers tend to deter those who don't know what they're doing. That has to be to everyone's ultimate benefit." *(steveren@cix.co.uk)*

"What if you just poke the screwdriver through the sticker to get to the screw? You don't remove the sticker, you just punch a small hole through it." *(jfmezei@videotron.ca)*

"If I open the fuel filler cap, open the rocker box engine oil cap or change the spark plugs on my Suzuki Vitara, I don't invalidate the warranty because Suzuki produce a quality vehicle which is meant to be maintained—unlike the Series 5 which appears to have been launched by amateurs one year before the bugs were ironed out of the system." *(ptarmigan@cix.co.uk)*

"For god's sake take it back and buy something that makes you happy before you have a stroke!" *(dlorde@cix.co.uk)*

"You're the exception in here. I think you'll find more satisfied S5 owners here than dissatisfied ones. Heck, even half the dissatisfied ones are still keeping and using the machine, which surely is a testament to the basic concept, even if there *are* a few minor niggles to be sorted out!" *(slitchfield@cix.co.uk)*

Don't Panic! Has it happened to you?

"Potential heart attack narrowly avoided. My new S5 would not recognise my password. It appears that this is case sensitive—I had entered the password in lower case and turned caps-lock on before switching on. Has anyone else found this a problem?" *(mksenvhealth@enterprise.net)*

"Yes, that happened to me as well. I freaked out. I sat there and typed in my password about 30 times, panicking. This was AFTER I read the official words from Psion that there was no way around the password. So I sat there dumbfounded. Then I tried hitting the caps lock and kaboom, it worked first try." *(conquest@aol.com)*

"Likewise. I thought I'd had some sort of psychotic episode when it didn't work! Do you suppose the programmers sit there sniggering when they write these things, thinking, 'this'll mess their heads up!!'" *(davjax@dircon.co.uk)*

"Every other piece of technology I use on a day-to-day basis (Lotus Notes, my ISP, etc.) uses case-sensitive passwords. I can't imagine why Psion's decision to use case-sensitive passwords should be seen as abnormal." *(ali-manson @psion.com)*

"Because the Series 3c doesn't have any indication as to whether caps lock is on or off! When typing blind, this is a problem!" *(mert0236@sable.ox.ac.uk)*

We wrap our Psions up in leather cases, clip them to our belts and treat them with tender care, but accidents still happen. Here are a collection of mishaps that I've uncovered in recent weeks. Just how much abuse can a Psion stand?

"Aaaarrrhhhhhh!! My 3a came dislodged from my belt yesterday, and fell about 6 feet onto concrete. It seemed all right at the time, but when I opened it this morning, it opened *lopsidedly*, and the button bar didn't work. It's booked in for repairs tomorrow. I was working on the low roof of a tower block plant room, and it fell off as I was climbing back down. I'm now going to fit a security chain to the case." *(mkinga@cix.co.uk)*

"My Dad managed to destroy one of the hinges on the 3a when he plugged the mains adaptor in when he was at work, and someone caught their foot in the wire while walking past. It catapulted across the room and smashed into the wall. The right hinge is now broken, but it still works well enough. It's just a little

peculiar to open and close now. Why he insists on plugging it in everywhere he goes is beyond me though." *(S9400671@llandrillo.ac.uk)*

"Yes folks, I accidentally dropped my 3a from a great height yesterday and smashed the thing completely in half. The screen half has totally separated from the keyboard with only a ribbon cable holding the two halves together. It is a testament to the machine that even in its current state it still functions perfectly well." *(martinm@cix.co.uk)*

"I reversed my car over my 3a, so I totally sympathise! It broke half of the screen, but amazingly it still worked. The Cellphone was a write off, though." *(earnjr@cix.co.uk)*

"Having tested if the 5 can survive being flung onto the floor from a height of one metre with an integral bounce off a chair leg with the screen open, I was wondering if it was possible to get hold of spare PC cables? Attempting to walk off with your 5 while it is attached to your PC tends to do the above as well as snapping part of the cable casing. Fortunately it still works OK, but I'm worried!" *(millar@cix.co.uk)*

"I dropped my new 5 on to an iron manhole cover last week—those nice people at Psion decided that it would take too long to fix so very kindly gave me a completely new one absolutely free of charge. The damage? Despite being in a leather case it broke the clip that holds the stylus in, scratched the case badly and displaced the keyboard cable and assembly slightly. It still worked, but grated—mostly my fault, but I was jostled by a little old lady heading for the bus at some speed." *(juggie@cix.co.uk)*

"My 3a is over 2 years old and has travelled the world with me. It's been dropped more than once and had an entire glass of red wine spilt over it. Despite all this it has not (so far) let me down. I have NOT had broken hinges or battery cable problems. All in all an absolutely marvellous machine!" *(kdm@kmercer.demon.co.uk)*

And finally...

One of the 'old chestnuts' that crops up on the Internet every now and again is the question: 'Is it safe for my Psion to be X-Ray'ed at the airport?' The answer has always been 'yes', until now...

"I recently had to pass mine through an X-ray, and while I was checked personally the idiot behind the desk let it run over the edge of the conveyor belt and onto the floor. Watch out!" *(volker@agnld.Uni-Potsdam.de)*

Psion related discussions take place in several Usenet newsgroups including comp.sys.psion.misc, as well as the Psion conference on CiX, the Psion area on AOL, and the Psion forum on CompuServe.

Pete Sipple.

The universal connection

For the last part in our connectivity series, Rick Andrews explains how to connect your Psion to virtually any computer that has a serial port

Hang on—"virtually any computer"? Sounds a bit much? Maybe not. We know that PCs have PsiWin to connect to the Psion, and we've read the *Palmtop* articles on connecting to the Amiga, Mac, Acorn, and Atari. So what's left? Well, almost any computer with a serial interface and a communications program. It's the lowest common denominator in computer communications, and even the humble Psion has a 'comms' program to allow it to talk to a modem or remote computer through an RS232 serial cable.

So how do you know if the other machine you're using can connect to the Psion? As long as it has a serial port and some communications software, you should be okay. The port might be differently labelled as an RS232 or RS422, 'Comms', 'COM1', 'COM2', a squiggly line to indicate a connection, or perhaps even a picture of a printer or modem. In any case the documentation that came with the computer should identify the port for you, and RS232 (or RS422) are the technical names to look out for.

For the purpose of this article I'm going to concentrate on connecting the Series 5 to an Apple Macintosh—purely because I'm typing this on my S5, I'm putting the article together on my Mac, and there is no other way to get data between these two machines at present. You can use the same procedure to connect your Psion to other computers too, as the basic steps are all the same.

But why bother to connect at all? The Psion can do so much on its own that perhaps there's no need to connect it to another machine? Unless you like living dangerously you'll at least need to

backup your data, and having another machine to back-up to may encourage you to do it more frequently—always a good thing. Also, you may have an Internet connection on the other machine, or a CD-ROM or floppy drive—some way of obtaining new Psion software which you'll need to transfer to your Psion.

Hardware

There are a few steps necessary to ensure that data can be passed successfully between the two machines. To start with, you must have the hardware to physically connect the two serial ports together. This takes the form of a serial cable or two.

At the Psion end of the connection:

On the Series 3 and 3a

You'll need the *3Link* 'soap-on-a-rope' serial module, and the serial connector cable which plugs into it. The serial cable ends in a PC standard 9-pin or 25-pin connector.

On the Series 3c and Series 5

Get hold of the 'Honda' serial cable which plugs into the side of the Psion and ends with a 9-pin connector. (This is known as the docking cable on the Series 5). Initially you could only buy this with the PsiWin package, but now it's available separately from your Psion accessory stockist.

For the remote computer

The first step here is to identify the serial (RS232) port. If you're lucky, the Psion cable will plug in directly without the need for any more adaptors. For the rest of us, it's time to hunt around for a serial cable which plugs into the socket and presents an industry-standard 9-pin or 25-pin 'D' connector. If you have problems, try finding someone else who has the same setup as you and find out what they're using. Alternatively try your local computer store who will help you to match up the required plugs and sockets.

If you use a cable that *appears* correct but doesn't seem to work, it may be that the transmit and receive lines are switched over at one end, which means that both computers are trying to send up the same wire, rather than one receiving and the other sending. Again, your computer dealer can sell you an adaptor to switch the transmit and receive lines around.

Software

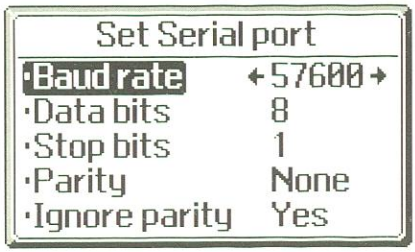
To pass data down the serial cable, you'll need a serial communications program at both ends. Psions (apart from Sienas) have one built-in, so that's not a problem. The communications software you'll need on your non-Psion computer

may be bundled with the machine or with with some 'Office' type software suites, or you may need to look for some freeware/shareware that does the same job. Ask your local computer dealer to sell you a basic communications package if necessary.

Now to configure the software—we'll start at the Psion end as it's the easiest to explain. The first step is to make sure there's nothing else using the port on the Psion, so check that you're not trying to print a document, etc., and make sure the Psion's Remote Link is switched off.

Next configure the port. The speed of data transfer along the serial connection is measured in 'bits per second' (bps), which is also known as the 'baud rate'. The higher the speed the faster you can send data, so it's worthwhile ensuring that you optimise this. The different machines have different speeds: for the Series 3 and 3a try 19,200 bps, on the 3c you can go up to 57,600 bps, and on the Series 5 go up to 115,200 bps if the computer at the other end will go that fast. If not, just move down to the highest speed that *both* machines can be set to.

The most important rule with the other settings is to make them identical on both computers, but a common standard is to use 8 data bits, 1 stop bit and no parity. Try this arrangement unless you have a good reason not to, as it works for most machines and is unlikely to give any compatibility problems.



Setting the 3c serial port speed

Lastly, handshaking (also known as flow control). This is the way the machines tell each other to slow down if the data is coming in too fast. The handshaking should be done by hardware if possible, as this is the most efficient method. Look for the RTS/CTS setting if there is one, and switch it on. If you can't find matching hardware handshaking, try XON/XOFF (this is flow control in software). Otherwise, switch handshaking off completely.

Setting the 3c handshake

So, to apply this to each machine:

For the Series 3 and 3a/3c

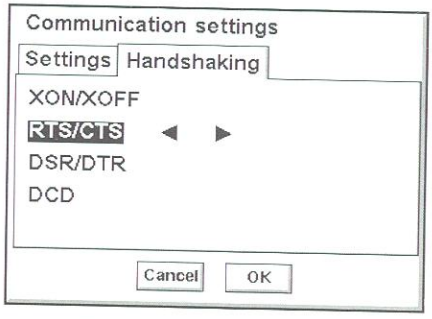
With the *3Link* module plugged into the Psion, install the 'Comms' application

(see your Psion manual for how to do this), move the cursor onto it and hit <Enter> to start it up.

Use 'Handshakes' <Psion><K> in the Comms program menu to set the 3c handshake.

For the Series 5

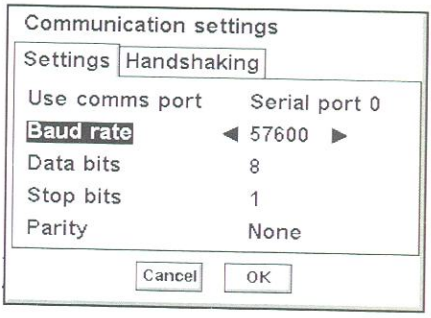
Tap the 'Extras' button to reveal the Extras bar—the Comms program is located on the first row by default. Tap it to open the program, then tap the 'Set up' tool to configure the serial settings.



Setting the Series 5 handshake

then tap the 'Handshaking' tab on the other page of this dialog to set the handshaking configuration.

If you see the phrase 'Access denied' at this point, it just means that you've already got the Remote Link running on the S5. Switch it off using <Ctrl><L> from the system screen and try again.



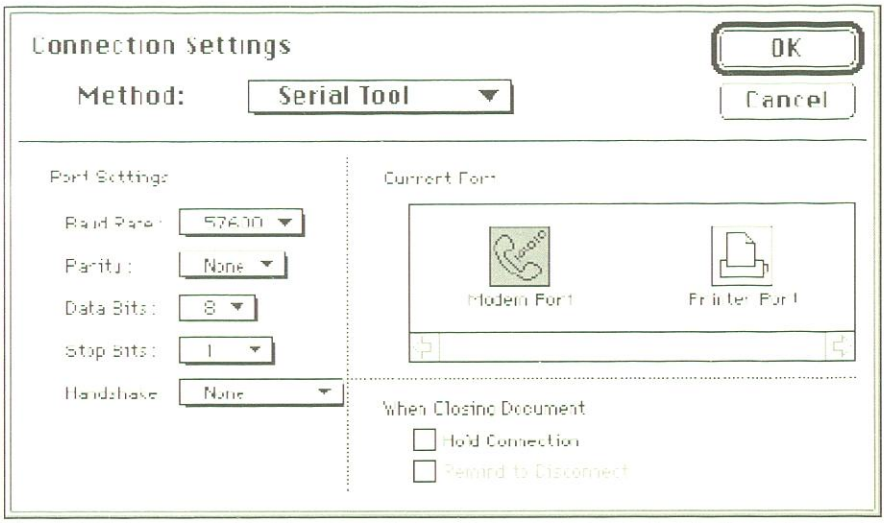
Choosing Series 5 port characteristics

Remote computer

As mentioned earlier, the secret to setting up serial communications is to make sure that both ends are running the same configuration. If there's a particular setting that you can't use on both machines, try a different choice. For example, if your remote computer doesn't support hardware handshaking, switch it off. But remember to change the Psion configuration to match—*all* settings should be identical on both computers.

To test the link, type a few characters on the keyboard of the remote machine, you should be able to see them appear on the Psion screen. Similarly, typing a sentence on the Psion keyboard should display the text on the remote screen.

In case of problems, try dropping the baud (bps) rate to the next slower value (don't forget to change the other machine setup so both ends are talking at the same speed). Once you're happy that the configuration is working okay, it's a good idea to save the settings if



Setting the communication port settings on the other computer

your particular software allows you to do this.

Exchanging files

Now we have the two machines talking to each other, let's look at how to transfer files. Decide on a file transfer protocol: ASCII, Xmodem, Ymodem or Zmodem. Try to use Zmodem wherever possible, or Ymodem (batch)—these are more user-friendly than the others. And watch out that the remote machine isn't going to try anything 'clever' like translating the line-feed characters without warning you—try and stick to 'binary' file format if there's a choice.

For the Series 5

To send a file:

1. Tap the 'Send file' tool. Or select 'Send file' from the 'Transfer' menu on the menu bar (<Ctrl><X>).
2. Select the protocol you've decided to use, for example, 'Ymodem (batch)'.
3. Pick the filename you wish to send. If necessary, you can move to another folder here by tapping the Folder line of the dialog. To send multiple files, tap on the filename (or press <Tab>) to display a file picker. Hold down <Shift> and tap to mark continuous groups of files, or <Ctrl> and tap to select non-adjacent files from the list.

4. Set up the remote machine so it's waiting to receive. You may only have a few seconds to start the transfer before the comms software times-out, so don't hang around at this point.

5. Hit <Enter> to start the transfer. Watch the file transfer box to see the files moving across to the remote computer.

To receive a file:

1. Get ready to send the file (or group of files) from the remote machine.

2. Tap the 'Receive file' button, or use 'Receive file' from the Transfer menu (<Ctrl><R>).

3. Enter the filename if necessary. ASCII and Xmodem need to be told the name, Ymodem cleverly sends the name across with the file.

4. Hit <Enter> on the Series 5 to get it ready to receive the file.

5. Start sending the file from the remote machine. The 'Receive file' dialog on the S5 shows the progress of the file as it comes across the serial lead. Any errors are shown at the bottom of this box. These may mean that you've set the connection speed too fast, so try reducing it.

If you have any problems with file transfer but you're happy that the serial link is running okay, try using a different file transfer protocol. There are various options on the Xmodem and Ymodem protocols, so just try to find one that works for your particular setup. Again, be sure to make changes at both ends.

Again, if you're happy that the settings you have are working, save the configuration to record the file transfer protocol details for next time.

For the Series 3/3a/3c

The same process applies, except that you select the file transfer protocol, then choose to 'transmit' or 'receive' a file.

One tip: if you want to make backups easier, I strongly suggest that you invest in *PsiZip*, a shareware zip tool for the 3a/3c from Serge Shestopalov. You can use the Backup command on the 3a/3c system screen to create the backup files in a sub-directory (for example, 'mybackup'), then use PsiZip to combine all the files in that directory to one backup archive file. Transferring one large file is a lot easier than many little ones! **(reviewed in issue 12 -Ed.)**

File formats

These have been covered in the previous articles, so I won't delve into them too deeply—suffice to say that you should use more 'portable' formats if you wish to exchange files with other machines: RTF format for word processing documents (TXT format for the Series 5), CSV format for database and sheet files, and binary format (raw data) for files that you want to archive on the remote machine.

FOR SALE

Cyclone floppy disk drive with mains adaptor - £120 ono.

Contact: David Thomson on 01592 260727.

2MB Series 3a (2 years old) with mains adaptor - £150, 4MB flash SSD - £210, 1MB RAM SSD - £165, PsiWin with cable - £50, Psion Money on SSD - £20, Autoroute Express (SSD) - £20, Berlitz Phrase Book (SSD) - £15, DataDeLuxe (SSD) - £15. Alternatively £525 for the whole lot.

Contact: Peter Ogden-Smith on 01505 862444.

Backlit Series 3c including Widget Stand - £295. 2MB flash SSD - £145, 1MB flash SSD - £110, Autoroute Express SSD - £30, Psion Money SSD - £20, Battery Eliminator and Toast Rack - £30, Cyclone floppy disk drive for Psion 3a - £80, 3a printer cable - £20 (buyer pays postage).

Contact: Tom Bentley on 01993 878100, fax 01993 878150, 0831 213864 (mobile).

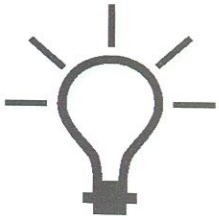
Scrabble (3a/3c, boxed and barely used) - £25, 3a Games Deluxe (as new, boxed) - £15, PsiWin (as new, boxed) - £35. Reasonable offers considered.

Contact: Simon Fuller on 01702 204044 anytime.

Siena (512K, 2 months old) with leather case, Gold Support service until 2/9/98, PsiWin for Siena/3c, mains adaptor, manuals, etc. - offers accepted, available individually or as one package.

Contact: Jeff Dennis on 0171 8929454, e-mail jeffery@dennis@lasmo.com.

Hints & Tips



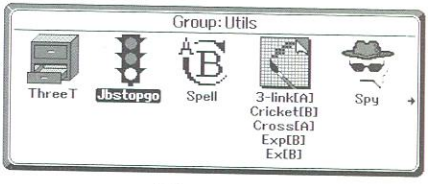
Get the most out of your Psion computer! Gary Bainbridge wins a free leather case for his useful OPO-to-OPA tip

From the next issue, EVERY published tip will win the author a FREE Palmtop tee shirt!

Smarten your OPO files

If you are like me, you probably have a few small OPL programs that you make regular use of. If these are OPO files they all sit under the RUNOPL icon, but wouldn't it be nice if you could place them exactly where you want them on the system screen, each under their own icon—just like OPAs. Well, a little-used feature of the Series 3a/3c means that you can!

- Before you can make your OPO file work like an OPA application, you will need an icon for it. You can either create your own using a program such as Martin Packer's shareware *Iconedit*, or you can choose a pre-drawn icon from one of the numerous collections available.
- Place your icon into an \ICN\ directory on your Psion, first creating the directory if it doesn't already exist. Now, using the file selector (Press <Tab> from the system screen) go to your OPO directory and create a new directory beneath it with the same name as your program (for instance, if the program is *Jbstopgo*, create a new directory entitled '\OPO\JBSTOPGO'). Now move the program's OPO file into the new directory.



Adding an icon

- Exit the file selector and go to the system screen. Move the cursor to the RUNOPL icon then press 'Menu'. Under the 'Special' menu, select 'Create new list', and enter the name of your new directory on the top line of the resulting dialog.
- Move down the dialog to the Icon option, and press <Tab>. Select 'Custom', then enter the name of the icon you wish to use. Finally return to the main dialog and save the new list under the same name as your program.
- You have now created a file within your APP directory with the name of your program and an ALS file extension. This is the alias file for your program. Your new 'application' will now appear on the system screen next to the RUNOPL icon. To put it where you want it, first delete it from its current position by using the 'Remove' function from the 'Apps' menu. Move the cursor to where you want your program to appear and install the alias file.
- As the icon is now stored within the alias file you may wish to save some memory by deleting the original icon file, which is now superfluous.
- Your program will now appear on the system screen exactly like a *Type 1* application (i.e. one without a file list). If the program supports the use of the status window, your icon will even appear there at the right of your screen, just as though it were a real OPA. I find this technique neater than simply having a faceless list of program names under the RUNOPL icon, and the icons make your files easy to identify.

Gary Bainbridge
Chelmsford, Essex

Psions as a rule...

To turn your 3a/3c screen into an approximate ruler measure, set up a new WORD file and give it an appropriate name such as 'Measure' or 'Ruler'. Make sure that the zoom view is the second largest of the four options (very important), set the 'Show Spaces' option on the 'Preferences' menu (<Psion><Q>) to 'Yes', and remove the status window (<Control><Menu>).

Then type <Control><124> to enter the vertical line character, and hit the spacebar 9 times. Highlight this text and copy it 9 times and you have a 10cm measure, conveniently divided into millimetres, as each space symbol is 0.1cm apart. On the line below add the numerals 1 to 10 or so under the vertical lines. Finally save the file, exit and set the file attributes to 'Read only'.

This ruler is not *exact*, as the 10cm in fact measures about 10.1cm, a 1% error—but I still find it to be yet another

A strange use for a Series 3a/3c?

worthwhile addition to the Psion's vast armoury of uses.

Ian Dawson
Sandy, Bedfordshire

Copying AGENDA entries

For some time I have been frustrated when copying and inserting timed entries into my AGENDA from one day to another. The duration of the entry is always an exact copy of the original entry, but the start time will be different depending on where in the day the entry is inserted.

If you have your slots set at hourly intervals and the inserted entry starts at, say, 2:15pm, this problem is compounded because the inserted entry will be set at a full hour slot. This is very frustrating if I have to do it several times.

I recently stumbled across a very simple way around this problem: just make sure that the insertion (<Psion><I>) takes place in the 'Week View' instead of the 'Day View'. The newly inserted event will then automatically start at the same time as the copied event without any further adjustment.

Nick O'Donovan
Southsea, Hampshire

Series 5 password fright!

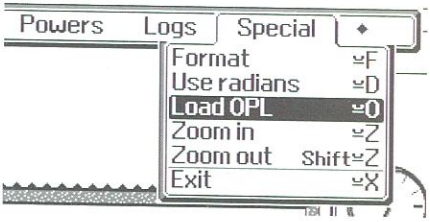
I almost suffered heart failure recently when I switched on my Series 5—it would not recognise my password. I later discovered that Series 5 passwords are case sensitive. I had turned caps-lock on the last time I used it, and set the password in lower case. Some of your readers who have upgraded from the 3c may have a similar experience and may be glad of this tip to avoid stress.

Martin Smith
Barnstaple, Devon

A CALC extension for VAT problems

When completing my monthly expenses I need to split receipts into the nett cost and the VAT component. The 3a/3c calculator handles percentages very well, but requires two calculations: one to work out the cost 'ex-VAT' and one to find the VAT part.

This can be done quite easily with a small OPL routine, and the resulting PROC loaded into CALC with <Psion><O>. There is normally a problem in returning two values at once, but the solution I stumbled upon is quite simple and is shown below.



Loading OPL routines into CALC

```
PROC XVAT: (amt)
  RETURN amt > 17.5%
  M1 = amt < 17.5%
ENDP
```

When the proc is called from the input line with '**XVat:**(<Amount>)', the '**RETURN**' line prints the ex-VAT cost on the input line and the '**M1**' line returns the VAT portion via the current working memory at the top of the screen (in this case M1) set via <Psion><M>. This idea can be used whenever a PROC needs to return two values to the Calculator.

Steve Dockar
Otley, West Yorkshire

Finding hotkey combinations

The Series 3 macro systems such as KMAC and MACSYS can be extremely useful, but it is sometimes hard to find memorable hotkey combinations that haven't already been used for the built-in applications. As an example, I don't usually print OPL source code from the Psion's OPL editor, but sometimes print from other programs. This caused a problem when I assigned a MACSYS macro to set up a new 'PROC' definition with <Psion><P>.

The MACSYS example 'Help' explains how to check whether the Macro was called from the appropriate application, and if it wasn't, to quit immediately. Adding a line to re-send the hotkey to the operating system means that any other program can still use the hotkey combination you pick, and only the target application will activate your macro. In the case of my OPL Editor macro which is assigned to <Ctrl><P>, the code looks like this:

```
rem -- Quit if not run from OPL
or Macro editor

if Pid2App$:( CurrPid%: ) <>
"Program"

REM-- Send Ctrl-P back to OS

 SendKey:(%p,ctrl%,1)

 Return

endif
```

This approach can be used to assign a macro to any hotkey combination that is not used in your target application, but *is* used in others, by changing the 'SendKey' command to match your chosen Hotkey.

Steve Dockar
Otley, West Yorkshire

Win prizes!

Don't forget that from the very next issue, EVERY published tip will win the author a FREE Palmtop tee shirt!

See page 115 for more details on these super quality shirts...

Murgan's Musings

Stephen Murgan talks about software piracy, and tells why he won't be buying a Series 5 yet...

While browsing the online newsgroups recently, I was intrigued to find a message from someone who was posting registration codes for various items of Psion shareware. Over the next few days this posting engendered several replies, ranging from mildly vituperative to outright rude. There was also, to my surprise, at least one message that actually supported this practice.

Commercial vs. shareware

With commercial software you pay your money up front, and the software is yours, warts and all. Most software retailers do not accept returns once they have been opened (on the very sensible grounds that they could have been illegally copied before their return), and most software license agreements allow the publishers to legally wriggle out of having the software perform as advertised and documented—a vile practice, in my opinion, that should be stamped out of existence along with exaggerated monitor dimensions, compressed capacities of storage media, and that old standby, "Monitor sold separately"—but as usual I digress...

On the whole, shareware is perhaps the most ethical form of software acquisition. You try it out, and if you like it you have the option of registering it. By the time you pay for it you already know that it works and is right for you, and if not you can erase it from your machine. The beauty of this approach is that you can evaluate several products, then go for the one you are happiest with.

Breaking the rules

That's the theory. In practice, of course, people have a tendency to treat shareware as free software if they can.

Because of this, shareware authors often have to resort to reduced or time-limited versions to 'encourage' users to register (and pay for) their software, at which time they get the full version. Many people feel that shareware should be fully functional, and have an aversion to what is euphemistically called 'crippleware'. In a perfect world they would be right. Personally I don't like crippleware, but I consider it a necessary evil.

We all, I suspect, have at least one item of unregistered shareware in our possession, on either our Psions or our PCs. It is a practice as common as playing Solitaire on the office computer: technically reprehensible, but almost everyone does it to the point that it has become part of the scenery.

From the programmer's point of view shareware is a neat way to 'cut out the middleman' and sell straight to the customer. With no marketing, distribution and advertising overheads to speak of, there is (at least in theory) a higher level of profitability to be had. I also like the idea that in most cases your shareware registration fees are going straight into the pocket of the programmer, and not enriching the war-chest of some faceless corporation. For this reason I feel that shareware must necessarily be cheaper than an equivalent commercially-available application. However, this is not always the case.

Perhaps an interesting example is PKZip, a program which just about everyone has, but hardly anyone I know has actually registered. However, in this particular instance it is understandable, for what is, after all, a file compression utility, PKZip is (in my humble opinion) almost criminally expensive. If the authors had decided to charge $15 instead of the $50 that they want for it I suspect that they would have made a lot more money. Greed can be a terrible thing.

On the other hand, much of the shareware for Psions is almost ridiculously cheap. Most of the shareware that I have registered in the past cost £10-15, and is written by enthusiasts, and supported well. Updates are usually distributed electronically, which also helps to reduce costs all round. At these kinds of prices, is it worth stealing?

My rule of thumb is this: If I find myself using a piece of shareware to the point where I feel that I will get my money's worth (or have already done so); if I cannot delete it without a profound sense of loss; if I have received good support, or at least timely and relevant answers to my questions; if there is a policy of continuous improvement at minimal or no cost—then it is time to write that cheque.

Shooting off your foot

So, to the pirates out there, keep on ripping off your shareware and soon there won't be any: the programmers will get tired of having their work stolen from them and will find something else

to do that pays better. Who will you rip off then? In the long run, there really is no such thing as a free lunch.

As a programmer myself I like that warm glow that comes from knowing that I am rewarding a fellow programmer for providing me with a useful utility or game for a relatively small amount of cash. Perhaps that sounds idealistic, but it's the only way to keep the shareware market alive and reward those who enrich our lives with the sweat of their collective brows.

Moving onto something a little more topical, (and with my tongue only partly in cheek), here are the 10 reasons why I won't be buying a Series 5 yet:

1. Bleeding-edge technology is not as reliable as that which has seen the test of battle. This is no reflection on Psion—I wouldn't buy a new car in the first model year either for precisely the same reason.
2. Let someone else find the problems, bugs and *gotchas*. Patches and bug fixes take time.
3. I don't *need* one right now.
4. Psion just replaced my machine with a new one under warranty. I may as well get some use out of it!
5. I'm waiting for the 5a (color display? Software modem? Please?)
6. It's not yet available with a wood-grain finish.
7. The first ones will be more expensive. The price will settle as time goes by and more machines reach the distribution channel.
8. Two words: Spouse Justification—("But I really need it, darling").
9. I will be in London later this year. Looks like I'll be taking a little trip down Memory Lane, or more precisely, the good old Tottenham Court Road...
10. Can we say "Christmas Present"?

Wanted

Psion Series 3a wanted (1MB or above).

Contact: David Gregory on 01734 833289 (evenings) or) 01734 270761 (daytime).

2MB Limited Edition Series 3a wanted (in good condition).

Contact: Peter Cooper on 01234 266585 or fax 01234 328592.

Maritek's ASTRO program for the Psion Organiser LZ64 wanted.

Contact: G B Littledale, 6B Lyngford Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7EG

The Psion Reference

If you would like to be included in this ever-expanding directory then please send details directly to *Palmtop* for free inclusion. If your entry is incomplete or incorrect then please update us!

Discussion Groups

UseNet Groups

comp.sys.psion.announce
comp.sys.psion.apps
comp.sys.psion.marketplace
comp.sys.psion.misc
comp.sys.psion.programmer
comp.sys.psion.reviews
comp.sys.psion.comm

CompuServe Psion discussion	Psion
CiX Psion conference	Psion
AOL - Psion Noticeboard	Psion/General noticeboard - Keyword: Psion

Psion Software

Imperial Archive FTP Site	*ftp://src.doc.ic.ac.uk/packages/psion/icdoc/*
Frontiernet FTP Site	*ftp://ftp.frontiernet.net/pub/psion*
New World Technology FTP Site	*ftp://ftp.nwt.com/*
Cityscape Psion Archive	*ftp://ftp.cityscape.co.uk/pub/psion/*

Usenet Binary Group	*comp.binaries.psion*
CompuServe Psion files area	*Psion* forum
CiX Psion files area	*/files* topic of the Psion conference

Psion FAQ

The Frequently Asked Questions document contains useful information, facts, names, addresses and numbers:

Posted monthly to the *comp.sys.psion.announce* newsgroup.

Available for FTP download from *news.answers* FTP sites, including rtfm.mit.edu/pub/usenet/news.answers/psion-faq/

An online version can be accessed from:
http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/8130/faq.htm

Available by e-mail. Send an e-mail message to mail-server@rtfm.mit.edu with a message containing the lines "send usenet/news.answers/psion-faq/*" to receive all parts or send a message containing "help" and "index" for more information.

Bulletin Boards

User Group (UK)	+44 (0)1752 780100
Lonely Times (Germany)	+49 911 393 9034
User Group (The Netherlands)	+31 515 574188
Belgian Psion BBS	+32 3 2262079

The Software Directory

Machine key: 3=Series 3, a=Series 3a, c=Series 3c, s=Siena, 5=Series 5
Items marked with a star (*) have been added or updated since the last issue

Name	Notes	File name	Version	Size	Machine	Author	Price
Business							
*Contact Edge	Contact manager	EDGE46.ZIP	4.6	76K	a/c	TCS/Ad Bosch	FREE
Plan	Project manager	PLAN.ZIP	4.2	102K	a/c/s	Andy Clarkson	£15
ProPoc	Project manager	PROPOP.ZIP	2.2	182K	a/c	Berthold Daum	A$99
Relate	Contact manager	RELATE10.ZIP	1.0	19K	s	Ad Bosch	£10
Communications Software							
Faxit	Fax sender	FAXIT14.ZIP	1.4	28K	a/c	Walter Wright	£14
FreeVT	VT100 terminal emulator	FREEVT04.ZIP	0.4	19K	a/c	Nils Faerber	FREE
JBCIS	Add-on to ReadCIS	JBCIS.ZIP	1.2.2f	48K	a/c	John Boyce	FREE
*Psion Dialler	Data add-on for travellers	DIALER.ZIP	3.21	40K	3/a/c/s	Protronics USA	$25
ReadCIS	Compuserve comms package	READCIS.ZIP	1.7.5	93K	a/c	David Keppler	£16/$25
ReadCIX	CIX comms package	READ49C.ZIP	4.9	109K	a/c	David Keppler	FREE
Termit	VT100 terminal emulator	TERMIT.ZIP	1.1	25K	a/c	Serge Shestopalov	£15
Websurf	Offline HTML browser	WEBSRF173.ZIP	1.73	40K	a/c	Arnaud Weil	£12
Conversion Packages							
Conversion Calc	Conversion package	CON3A.ZIP	6.1c	103K	a/c	T Bentinck	??
Convert 3	Conversion package	CONVT1C.ZIP	1.1c	12.8K	3	P Synott	£8
Convert 3a	Conversion package	CONV41A.ZIP	4.1a	26K	a/c	P Synott	£8
Convert 2.1	Conversion package	CNV21.ZIP	2.1	27K	a/c	T Nemec	$10
ConVert 2	Conversion package	CNVT2-16.ZIP	1.6	9K	a/c	Jon Duff	£10
Toolkit 1	Plus other utilities	n/a	n/a	n/a	a/c	Purple Software	£40
Database Applications							
DataImp	Video/music/photo DB	IMP120.ZIP	1.2	64K	a/c	Patrick Bell	£15
JBData	Database application	JBDATA.ZIP	1.5.1	66K	a/c	John Boyce	FREE
DataView	Database application	n/a	n/a	n/a	a/c	Purple Software	£35
DataView Pro	Uprated from DataView	n/a	n/a	n/a	a/c	Purple Software	£60
DataDeLuxe	Database application	n/a	??	n/a	??	Pocket & Soul	£50
Drawing Packages							
Draw	Draw	DRAW284.ZIP	2.84	60K	a/c	Rick Andrews	£10
DrawIt	Vector drawing	n/a	n/a	n/a	a/c	Purple Software	£40
Icon Draw	Draw icons	ICONDRAW.ZIP	1.1	5K	a/c	Jon Duff	£10
Paint & Compose	Draw/music	n/a	2.01F	128K	a/c	Widget Software	£39.95
PicPoc	Drawing	PIC3A.ZIP	2.67	109K	??	Berthold Daum	A$50
S3A Draw	Icon/picture editor	S3ADRAW3.ZIP	1.3	74K	a/c	Alan Richey	$15
SNA Draw	Icon/picture editor	SNADRAW0.ZIP	1.0	72K	s	Alan Richey	$15
File Managers							
3T	File manager	3T_139.ZIP	1.39	15K	a/c	Roger Muggleton	FREE
3T (Siena)	File manager	3TS_101.ZIP	1.01	8K	s	Roger Muggleton	FREE
File Manager	Part of Toolkit 1	n/a	n/a	n/a	3/a/c/s	Purple Software	£40

Filer	File manager	FILER30.ZIP	3.0	84K	a/c	T Nemec	$30
JBTree	File manager	JBTREE.ZIP	4.2.6	33K	a/c	John Boyce	FREE
SnFile	File manager	SNFILE11.ZIP	v1.1	24K	s	Richard Wakelin	£10
Synchro	File Synchronization	SYNCHRO.ZIP	3.1	15K	a/c	Jean-Philippe Pasquier	$10
Utils 3a	File manager	UTILS2.ZIP	2.3	45K	a/c	G P Tappenden	??
X3Tree	File manager	X3TREE12.ZIP	1.21	42K	a/c	Richard Wakelin	£10

Finance Packages

Bank	Accounts package	BANK843.ZIP	8.43	18K	3	Pete Sipple	£5
Banker	Accounts package	n/a	2.0	??	??	Pelican Software	£60
BankPlus	Accounts package	BANKP22.ZIP	2.2	40K	a/c	Pete Sipple	£8
BankPlus	Accounts package	BANKS101.ZIP	1.1s	32K	s	Pete Sipple	£8
*BankPlus	Accounts package	BP5_04.ZIP	0.5	32K	5	Pete Sipple	£8
*Bill	Calculates bills	BILL2.ZIP	1.0	56K	a/c	Tom McGaw	£5.99
*Bill	Calculates bills	BILL1.ZIP	1.0	49K	s	Tom McGaw	£5.99
DP Bank	Accounts package	DPBANK16.ZIP	1.6	71K	a/c	Daniel Pfund	£10
Expense	Expense tracking	EXPENS10.ZIP	1.0	7K	3	Julius K Bjornsson	??
Finance Pack	Accounts package	n/a	4.20F	256K	a/c	Widget Software	£49.95
Financial Advisor	Mortgage/pension calculator	ADVISOR4.ZIP	4.0	5K	3/a/c/s	Gary Perlmutter	£7
*Interest	Interest calculator	INTEREST.ZIP	1.0	4K	s	Tom McGaw	£2
Psion Money	Accounts package	n/a	??	n/a	a/c	Psion PLC	£50
S3A Bank	Accounts package	S3ABANK19.ZIP	1.9	257K	a/c	Alan Richey	$30
S5 Bank	Accounts package	S5BANK10.ZIP	1.0	390K	5	Alan Richey	$30
Sna Bank	Accounts package	SNABANK2.ZIP	1.2	240K	s	Alan Richey	$30
S3A Expenses	Expense account tracker	S3AEXP2.ZIP	1.2	66K	a/c	Alan Richey	$15
SNA Expenses	Expense account tracker	SNAEXP0.ZIP	1.0	66K	s	Alan Richey	$15
S3A Fuel	Fuel consumption monitor	S3AFUEL7.ZIP	1.7	42K	a/c	Alan Richey	$10
SNA Fuel	Fuel consumption monitor	SNAFUEL2.ZIP	1.2	40K	s	Alan Richey	$10
S3A Home	Home inventory	S3AHOME4.ZIP	1.4	44K	a/c	Alan Richey	$10
SNA Home	Home inventory	SNAHOME0.ZIP	1.0	44K	s	Alan Richey	$10
S3A Invest	Investment tracker	S3AINV14.ZIP	1.4	44K	a/c	Alan Richey	$10
SNA Invest	Investment tracker	SNAINV0.ZIP	1.0	44K	s	Alan Richey	$10
S3A Planner	Budget planner	S3APLAN5.ZIP	1.5	32K	a/c	Alan Richey	$10
SNA Planner	Budget planner	SNAPLAN1.ZIP	1.1	32K	s	Alan Richey	$10

General Utilities

Agenda Dump	Agenda reporting tool	AGDMP104.ZIP	1.04	17K	a/c	Simon Pooley	FREE
Alerts	Alert manager	ALERTS10.ZIP	1.0	16K	a/c	Max Bisschop	FREE
BusyView	Agenda monthly view	BUSYV141.ZIP	1.41	35K	a/c/s	Lieuwe de Vries	$25
DskUse	Requires MACSYS 2.0	DSKUSE.ZIP	1.3	6K	a/c	Lord Wodehouse	FREE
GBatt	Battery monitor	GBATT14b.OPA	1.4	10K	a/c	Max Bisschop	FREE
Geoclock	World daylight map	GEOCLOCK.ZIP	1.55	14K	a/c	John Davies	FREE
JB Active	Application manager	JBACTIVE19.ZIP	1.9.1	23K	a/c	John Boyce	FREE
JB Backup	Backup utility	JBCKUP12.ZIP	1.4	15K	a/c	John Boyce	FREE
JB Find	File locator	JBFIND.ZIP	2.7c	20K	a/c	John Boyce	FREE
*JBResetM	Recover lost memory	JBRESETM.ZIP	?	4K	a/c	John Boyce	FREE
JBSort	Database sort	JBSORT13.ZIP	1.3b	12K	a/c	John Boyce	FREE
*JWIN	Information and conversions	JWIN142F.ZIP	1.42F	25K	a/c/s	Phil Spencer	£5
*LaunchPad	Application launcher	LPAD210F.ZIP	2.10F	18K	a/c/s	Phil Spencer	£5
MonthVu	AGENDA add-on	MONTHVU.ZIP	1.10D	27K	a/c	CESD	??
Outlook AGN. Sync.	Synchronizes Outlook 97	OUTLOOKS.EXE	0.4b	2.1MB	a/c/s	Brian Cadge	$26
Pason	Password on startup	PASON4C.ZIP	4C	9K	a/c	A Lord	??
Procyon Light	Astronomy/planetarium	P_LHT202.ZIP	2.02	240K	a/c	Van Can/Sussenbach	FREE
*PsiOn	Password utility	PSI-ON20.ZIP	2.0	19K	a/c/s	Paul Hargreaves	£6

PassApps (Siena)	AGENDA/DATA password	PASAPPSN.ZIP	1.9f	9K	s	Phil Spencer	£5
PassApps (3a)	AGENDA/DATA password	PASAPP3A.ZIP	1.9f	9K	a	Phil Spencer	£5
PassApps (3c)	AGENDA/DATA password	PASAPP3C.ZIP	1.9f	9K	c	Phil Spencer	£5
S3A Task	To-do manager	S3ATASK2.ZIP	1.2	66K	a/c	Alan Richey	$15
Saikan	Japanese character (Kanji) dict.	SAIKAN13.ZIP	1.3	1MB	a/c	Jamie Packer	FREE
Stopwatch	10mS resolution stopwatch	STPWT201.ZIP	2.01	8K	a/c	Simon Pooley	FREE
Stopwatch!	Basic stopwatch	SW.ZIP	1.05	5K	a/c	K McLoughlin	FREE
SysMemv2	Requires MACSYS 2.0	SYSMEM2.ZIP	2.0	6K	a/c	Lord Wodehouse	FREE
*TimeMan	Time-related utilities	TMAN400.ZIP	4.00f	50K	a/c	Phil Spencer	£10
Tone Pad	DTMF dialer/timer	TONEPD11.ZIP	1.1	10K	a/c	Simon Pooley	FREE
*Ultimate Siena	Lottery and cheque programs	ULTIMATE.ZIP	1.0	4K	s	Tom McGaw	FREE
Unzip	ZIP file decompressor	FUNZIP.ZIP	1.4	10K	a/c	Jochen Siegenthaler	FREE

Macro Software

KMAC	Macro software	KMACRO.ZIP	??	64K	a/c	David Wood	??
MACSYS	Macro software	MACSYS.ZIP	2.0	40K	a/c	Tom Dolbilin	FREE

Miscellaneous applications

Colleague	Phone contact manager	COLLEAGUE.ZIP	1.5	15K	a/c/s	Ad Bosch	FREE
Facsman	Facilities management	FMAN143.ZIP	1.43	38K	a/c/s	Gary Bainbridge	£15
Fit4Life	Health and fitness	FIT4LIF3.ZIP	1.3	28K	3/a/c/s	Steve Litchfield	FREE
Geni	Family tree browser	GENI-120.ZIP	1.20	42K	a/c	Martin N Dunstan	£15
GolfCard	Golf database	GOLFC201.ZIP	2.01s	70K	s	M-P(Golf)Systems	£25
Graph 3a	Graph plotter	GRAF3A14.ZIP	1.4	36K	a/c	Gareth Wild	£8
KallCost	Phone call timer	n/a	2.0.08	n/a	3/a/c	Widget Software	£20
Kgene	Genealogy package	KGENF107.ZIP	1.07	21K	a/c	Kevin Groves	FREE
Linkwise	Connect to Novell Groupwise	n/a	1.1	n/a	a/c/s	Advansys	A$99.50
*Lottery	Lottery program	LOTTERY.ZIP	1.0	3K	s	Tom McGaw	FREE
Lotto3a	Graphical lottery analyser	LOTTO422.ZIP	4.22	30K	a/c	Patrick Bell	£12
MemoVoc	Voice memo manager	n/a	3.0	n/a	a/c	David Joyce	£20
MyCar	Fuel consumption monitor	MYCAR416.ZIP	4.16	25K	a/c	Ad Bosch	£15
*MyCar S5	Fuel consumption monitor	MYCAREN.ZIP	1.0	21K	5	Ad Bosch	£10
Notable Dates/Events	1997 dates/events	N/A	1.21	25K	a/c	On-Board Info Ltd	£12.95
Notepad Deluxe	Notepad/utilities	n/a	??	n/a	a/c	Pelican Software	£60
Polaris	Astronomy/sky chart	POLAR13.ZIP	1.3	200K	a/c	Achay Doan	$15
*Psi-Tact	Contact manager	PSITACT22.ZIP	2.2	57K	a/c	Tony Crocker	£15
*Psi-Tact Siena	Contact manager	PSITACSI.ZIP	1A	39K	s	Tony Crocker	£7
PUR	PowerUp memos	PUR130E.ZIP	1.30E	26K	a/c	Brendan W Breede	$20
Reader	Text reader	READER23.ZIP	2.3	83K	a/c	Barry Childress	??
Shoplist	Shopping list assistant	SLIST113.ZIP	1.13	34K	a/c	Hugh Matthews	£10
S3a Collect	Book/video collection mgr.	S3ACOLL2.ZIP	1.2	47K	a/c	Alan Richey	$10
Sna Collect	Book/video collection mgr.	SNACOLL0.ZIP	1.0	47K	s	Alan Richey	$10
Toolkit 1	Utilities	n/a	n/a	n/a	a/c	Purple Software	£40
Toolkit 2	Utilities	n/a	n/a	n/a	a/c	Purple Software	£40
*Weight and Balance	Aviation utility	WTBAL.ZIP	1.0	7K	a/c	Graham Taylor	£15

Mapping

*GeoDIS	General mapping	GEO06PRG.ZIP	1.06	56K	a.c	Rolf Aeschbacher	£15
*Geographical Database	UK road atlas	GEODB.ZIP	1.5	600K	a/c	Keith Hollis	£34
GPS AutoRoute	GPS add-on for AutoRoute	AGPS10.ZIP	1.0	19K	a/c	Mike Rudin	FREE
GPS Mapping	GPS reader	GPSB0_09.ZIP	??	62K	a/c	Simon Taylor	FREE
*Psi-Mapper	UK mapping	MAPA50.ZIP	5.0	106K	a/c	Steve Litchfield	£14
*Psi-Mapper	UK mapping	MAP5GB53.ZIP	5.3	106K	5	Steve Litchfield	£14
Mapper GB	UK mapping	MAPS11.ZIP	1.1	83K	s	Steve Litchfield	£14

Mapper Ireland	Ireland mapping	MAPI15.ZIP	1.5	97K	a/c	Steve Litchfield	£9
*MetroRER	Paris Metro	METRER.ZIP	1.1c	50K	a/c	??	150FFR
Psigar	GPS utilities	PSIGAR29.ZIP	??	46K	a/c	??	??
Psi-Mapper France	French mapping	MAPF11.ZIP	1.1	100K	a/c	Steve Litchfield	£14
*Psi-Mapper London	London mapping	MAPLO22.ZIP	2.2	126K	A/C	Steve Litchfield	£14
*Psi-Mapper London	London mapping	MAP5LO23.ZIP	2.3	149K	5	Steve Litchfield	£14
*Nicholson London Pages	London information	n/a	n/a	n/a	.a/c	Mobile Software	£19.95
Subway	London underground	SUBW1A.ZIP	1.0a	25K	a/c/s	Tat Tang	Charity
Tube 3a	London underground	n/a	??	120K	a/c	Simon Webb	£31.90
W2	World map	W2.ZIP	1.1	4K	3/a/c/s	John McAleely	FREE

Missed you?

Have we missed any of your products from this listing? If so, then either send the details to the Editor (see contact details on page 1), or preferably use the special online update form on our World Wide Web site to submit or update your entry.

Lost or stolen Psion?

It your Psion computer has been lost or stolen then you may be interested to know that a UK user has set up an independent worldwide service to keep track of the serial numbers of such machines. Here is the WWW address of the registry (which shows descriptions and serial numbers only—all personal information is kept offline):

http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/groucho/

If you do not have WWW access then you can send details by post, or send an SAE for a printed list of missing machines. Please send your name, address, telephone number, description of item lost or stolen and serial number(s)

Address to send to is:

Mark Avey
39 Union Street
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire GL52 2JN

An introduction to SHAREWARE

On the pages of *Palmtop* you'll read a lot about '*shareware*'. With the introduction of the Siena and now the Series 5 the shareware scene is getting much busier than before, but there are still many readers who've never taken the plunge into the vast archives of Psion software. In an effort to make Shareware more accessible, here is a quick guide to what's available, and how to get it...

What is shareware?

Written by professional programmers and enthusiasts to meet specific (and sometimes unusual) needs, shareware is normally supplied for use on a thirty day trial basis. If you like the software then you are expected to send a payment to the author. Each program comes with information on its use and cost.

Where do I get it?

- Via a modem. This is the best option, as you have access to a range of other services too. With a modem, you can 'download' software to your desktop computer or direct onto your Psion machine. Where possible, look for a 28,800K (or higher) modem. If you're new to the Internet, your best bet might be to connect via an Online Service such as *CompuServe*, *AOL* or *CiX* (in the UK) to get a feel for the way we communicate electronically. Many computer magazine cover disks contain the software you need. Connection via an *Internet Service Provider* brings a more direct connection, but can be difficult to set up. If you don't wish to sign up with a service provider, the alternative is to download files from a bulletin board.
- From the *3-lib* shareware library. Shareware is supplied on 3.5" PC disc or copied direct onto an SSD. See the advertisement section for details.
- From a PC-format CD ROM. Available from leading Psion dealers, these discs contain stacks of useful programs and utilities.

How do I use it?

You'll be able to obtain a list of what files are available from any of the above sources . Once you've found the file you want, there are four steps to take:

1. Obtain the files. See above.

2. Uncompress the files. Psion applications normally have more than one component (i.e. the program itself, help files and pictures). These are normally compressed into one file, which makes them easier to distribute. Shareware is most commonly compressed in 'Zip' format, and you can recognise these by the '.ZIP' at the end of the filename. Before you can install and run the program, you need to extract these files with an 'unzip' program. 'Unzippers' are freely available from your shareware supplier. If you use DOS, look for *PKZIP*, Windows 3.1/95 users can use *Winzip*, and Mac users should try *Zipit*. You can unzip files on your Psion without using another computer, using either *PsiZip* or *S3UNZIP*.

3. Copy the files. You now need to transfer the unzipped files onto your Psion (unless you're getting it on SSD). To do this you'll need some external hardware, such as:

- Serial Lead (*3Link*). Connect your Psion to a desktop machine or a modem.
- Cyclone drive. Connect a 3.5" floppy disc drive to your 3a.
- SSD RAM drive. Copy programs to a RAM SSD via your PC's printer port.

Normally, one of the unzipped software files is a text file (i.e. README.TXT), which explains how the program should be installed and where the files need to be copied to on your Psion. Most 3a/3c software comes in the form of an 'application' file, and the .OPA or .APP file needs to live in the \APP\ directory.

4. Install the application. From your 3/3a/3c or Siena system screen, select <Psion><I>, and if the program was copied correctly the filename should appear in the list. Select it, press <Enter>, and your program should be installed and ready to run.

If there are any aspects of shareware that you think need more coverage then we'd like to hear from you. Please send your comments and suggestions to me, care of *Palmtop*.

Pete Sipple - Petesipple@aol.com

Further reading

Shareware - What, Where & How - Page 43, Issue 6

Connecting your Series 3 - Page 41, Issue 5

Going on-line - Page 40, Issue 1

SSD Drive - Page 41, Issue 7

CD ROM - Page 20, Issue 7 ; Page 19, Issue 4

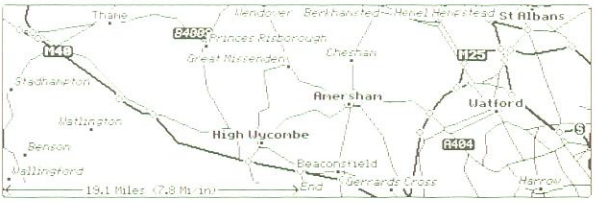
Cyclone - Page 14, Issue 7

PsiZip — Page 28, Issue 12

Get ALL the shareware featured in this issue on a floppy disk - see page ???

Geographical Database

A handy 'Pocket Road Atlas' for your Series 3a/c giving very detailed digital maps of the UK. Map data supplied by the AA from their 3 miles/in Road Atlas book. Holds over 20 overlays from motorways down to B-roads, airports, county boundaries, railways, ferries, service stations, heliports, etc.



- Accurate and up-to-date map information
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Registration costs £34 incl. user manual. Also available on SSD ROM at £59.95

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Shareware version available from http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/Fawnbench

For more information please contact Keith Hollis at keith.hollis@usa.net

Fawnbench Ltd., P.O. Box 226, Bagshot, Surrey GU19 5YY Tel: 01276 451239

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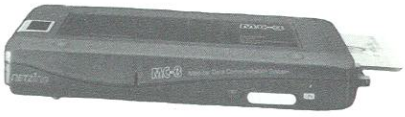

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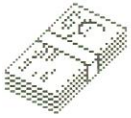

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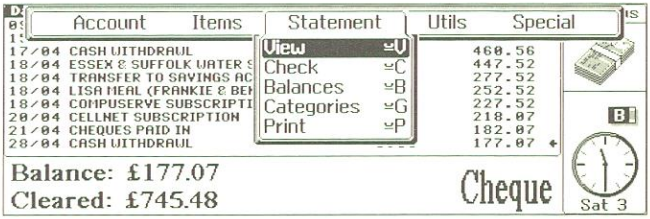

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Pete Sipple, Top Floor, 17 Devereux Road, Southend-on-Sea SS1 1DR

Available from *http://members.aol.com/petesipple/bankplus.htm* and usual shareware sources, Email *psipple@cix.co.uk* for details

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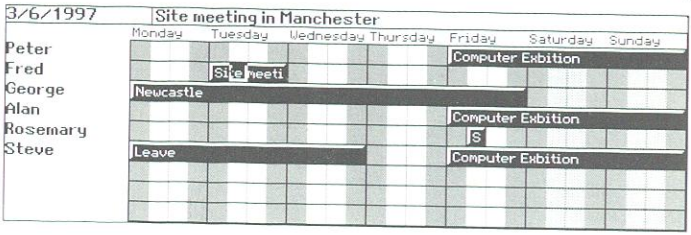
Where's Fred? Who's free on Thursday? When's Steve back?

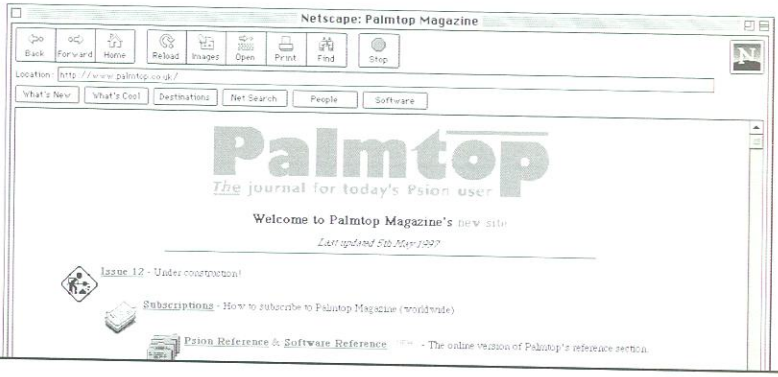


See at a Glance with Facilities Manager

Available from *http://www.cix.co.uk/~bainb/facsman.htm* or from *3-Lib*

http://www.palmtop.co.uk/

Our WWW site has now been moved to a fast new server location, kindly provided to us by UK Online.



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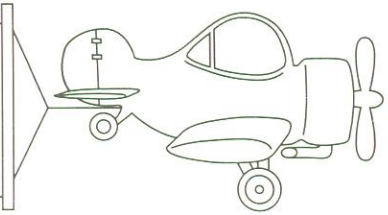

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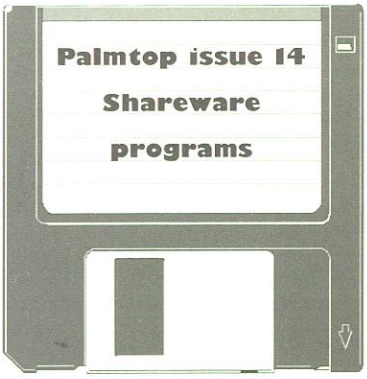

(cheques payable to Steve Litchfield)

The shareware and freeware programs featured in each issue of *Palmtop* are all available—either from the major FTP sites, authors' WWW sites, or from the major online services.

As a new service for *Palmtop* readers, *3-Lib* are offering a standard 3½" PC floppy disk containing *all* the programs featured in this issue for the benefit of anyone having difficulty finding what they need.

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S3AEXP & SNAEXP Expense Account Monitor — £10 (15US$)

This program allows you to monitor your Expense Account, allocating entries to categories and reconciling them once they are claimed. It also includes an optional company car monitor, where usage can also be allocated to categories.

S3AFUEL & SNAFUEL Fuel Consumption Monitor — £7 (10US$)

This program allows you to track the fuel consumption for up to 10 vehicles. It is fully configurable, allowing entry and/or display in miles/kilometers and litres/galls. Full details of the previous entries are available, as well as a graphical representation.

S3AHOME & SNAHOME Home Inventory Monitor — £7 (10US$)

This program allows you to keep track of the value of your household possessions for insurance purposes. It is based on the Home Inventory module produced for Quicken. At regular intervals you can update all the Items for inflation, and print out the details.

S3AINVEST & SNAINVEST Investment Performance — £7 (10US$)

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This program allowsyou to run a household budget account. Up to 30 Agencies can be entered, and monthly bill values assigned and then reconciled as they are paid. The program is based on the Financial Planner module produced for Quicken.

S5TASK & S3ATASK Extended ToDo Manager — £10 (15US$)

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S3ADRAW & SNADRAW Drawing/Icon Viewer/Editor — £10 (15US$)

This program allows you to view, edit or design pictures and icons. It comprises three components, a Picture Viewer, a Picture Editor and an Icon Editor. These allow you to view existing pictures or design, create, and edit bitmap picture or Icons

S3ACOLLECT & SNACOLLECT Collection Manager — £7 (10US$)

This program allows you to handle a database of a collection such as records, stamps, books etc. The difference with this program is that as well as the labels being configurable, the screen display, printout and sorting method are also fully configurable.

F A Richey **6001 Natick Court** **Burke, VA 22015** **USA**	**E-Mail: alanrichey@compuserve.com** All the programs are available on the World Wide Web at: http://members.aol.com/alanrichey or on CompuServe, America Online & CIX or at: ftp://ftp.nwt.com/S3A and ftp://ftp.nwt.com/Siena or send a 3.5" disc & stamped addressed envelope to one of these addresses	**F A Richey** **C/O Sonas** **Calgary** **Isle of Mull** **Argyle PA75 6QT** **SCOTLAND**

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At last a book providing a complete guide to software development for the whole Psion palmtop range, including Series 5

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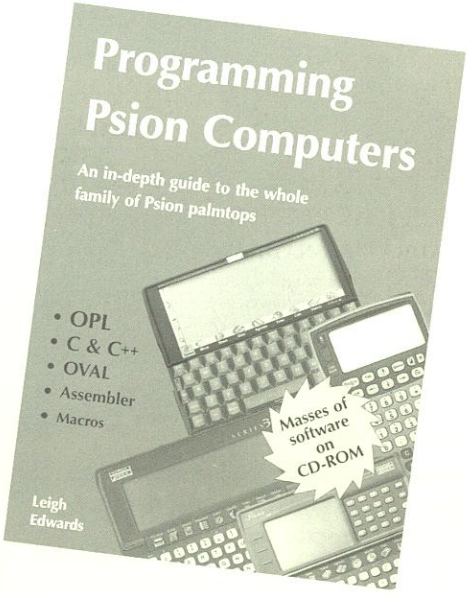

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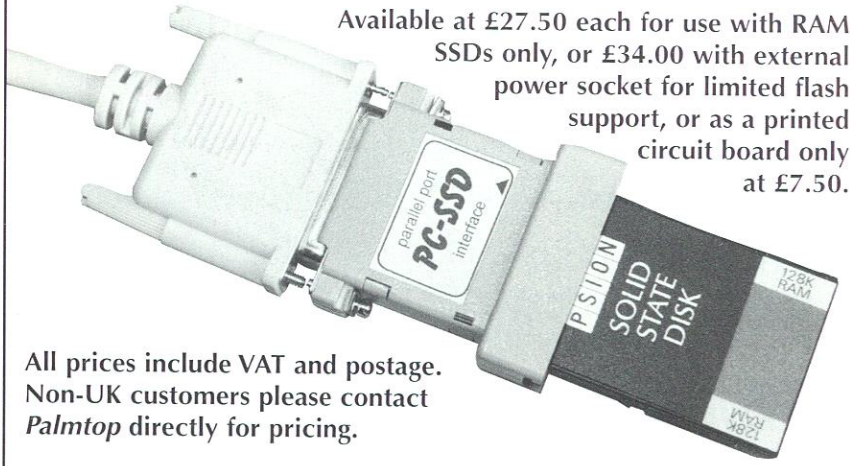

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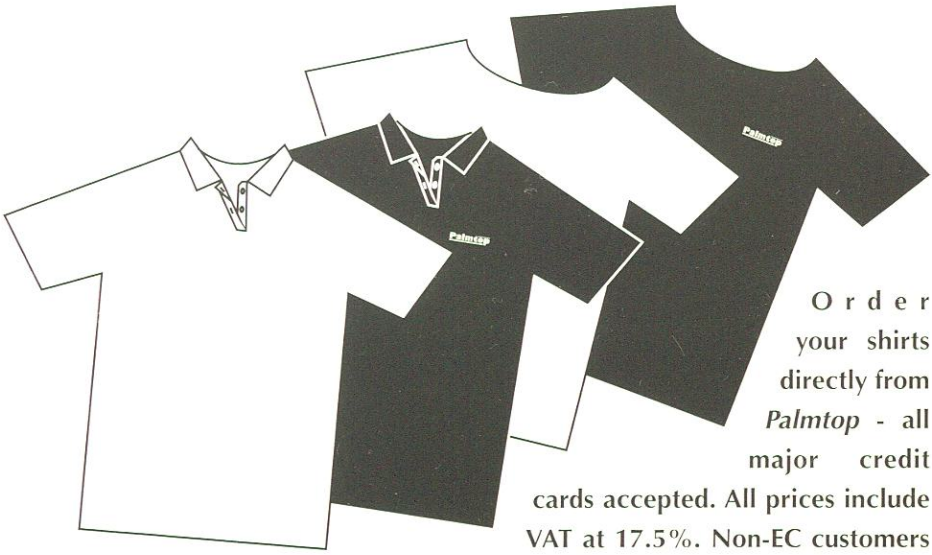

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Next issue...

Planned for issue 15:

- We visit Psion's Technical Support department and find out how it all works...
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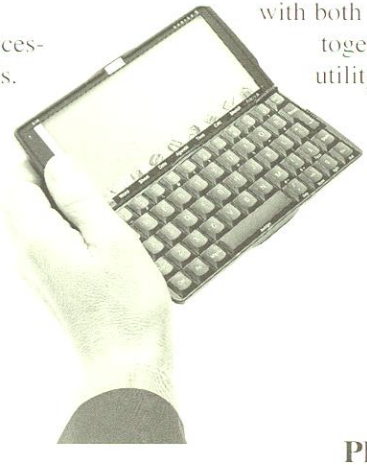

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